

Is John Birt  
the devil?



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Analysis page 13

# THE INDEPENDENT

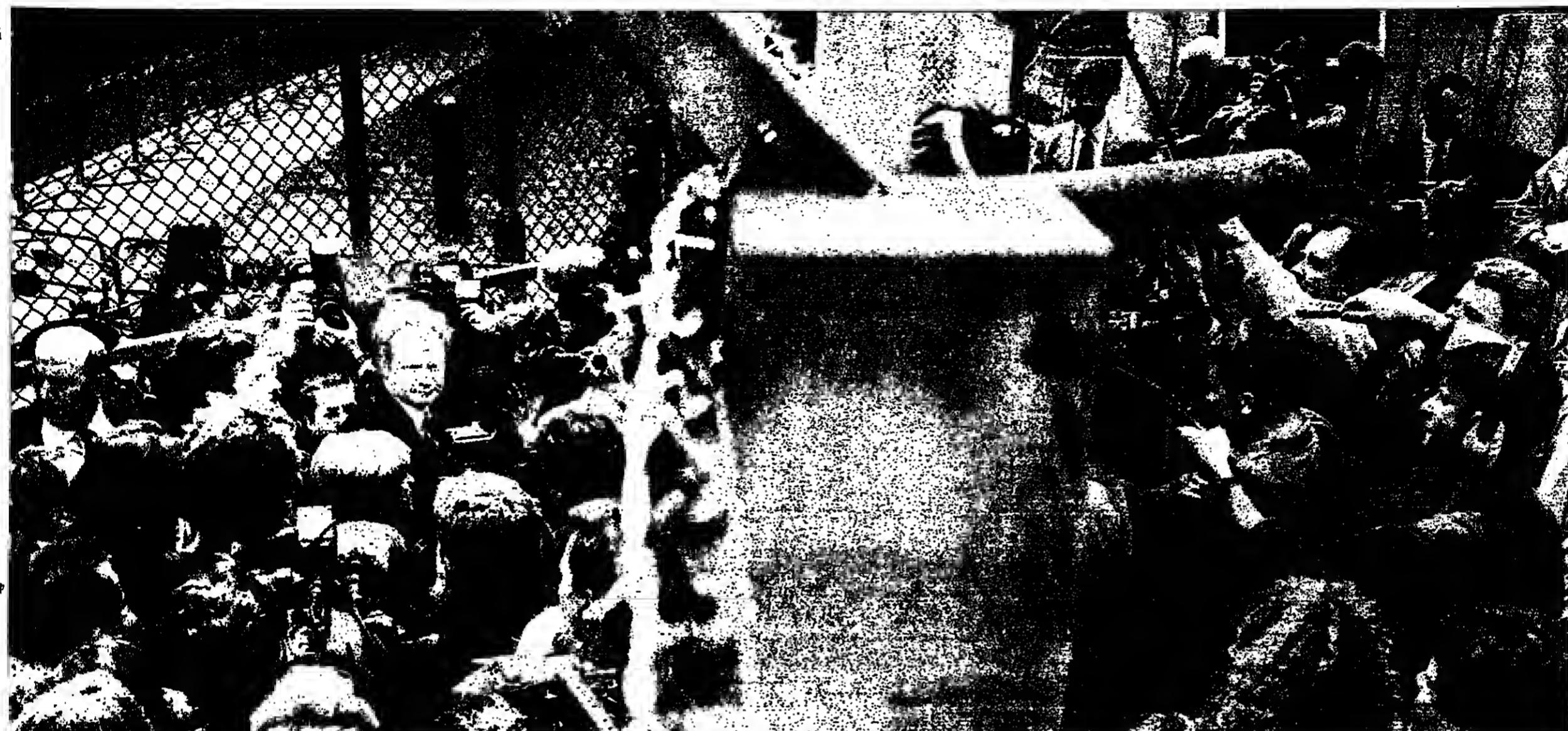
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TUESDAY 11 JUNE 1996

WEATHER Dull with scattered showers 40p (12 45p)

David McKittrick sees the republican and loyalist spin-doctors hijack a moment in history

## The men behind the wire



Across the great divide: Sinn Fein leaders Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness on the wrong side of the wire fence surrounding Stormont Castle after they were refused entry to yesterday's talks

Photograph: Brian Harris

Up close, it didn't feel like the stuff of history. It seemed like confusion, a disorganised mêlée in which, not for the first time, the republican and loyalist publicity machines bested the Government's spin-doctors.

John Major did his best, on the first day of potentially momentous talks in Belfast, to strike a note of realistic statesmanship: he had no illusions, he said, that the talks process would not be long, difficult and demanding.

But the propaganda battle-honours of the day went to Gerry Adams and Ian Paisley, who grabbed the headlines with their finely-calculated grandstanding. Mr Adams was pictured worldwide as "the potential peacemaker buried from the conference chamber"; Mr Paisley, who cares little for the wider world and concentrates on his domestic market, was able to project himself locally as the Union's fiercest defender.

Inside Castle Buildings in suburban east Belfast, the parties and the British and Irish governments finally convened for what might or might not turn out to be all-important talks. The presence of Mr Major and

the Taoiseach, John Bruton, was meant to send the message that this was the real thing.

But, as so often before, Mr Paisley, veteran of a thousand demos, protests and headline-grabbing manoeuvres, took the proceedings by the scruff of the neck. George Mitchell, the former US Senator asked by the

opening speech, handed over the proceedings not to Senator Mitchell but to the Northern Ireland Secretary, Sir Patrick Mayhew.

Doing so averted a potential Paisley walkout, but it also introduced a new element of uncertainty as to Senator Mitchell's role in the whole

broadcast live on BBC. But half an hour before they went on air, somebody in the Government pulled the plug and the live coverage was aborted. The Government was worried, the rumour went, about the possibility of Paisleyite heckling.

The cameras focused instead on Gerry Adams who,

here the cameras, which came from Japan, Norway and many other countries, dwell on him for long and lovingly.

It went on for so long that one government press officer completely lost his cool. Abandoning the subtler points of news management, he simply grabbed one television camera

for the conference centre itself, surrounded by a crowd of perhaps 300 media people. Mr Adams specifying all the time. While the Prime Minister was opening the talks, the cameras instead feasted on the strong, simple image of the republicans being denied a place at the table.

It was at the third and final fence that the Sinn Fein crew became, in the words of the old republican tune, the men behind the wire. The rousing drinking-song is particularly apposite for Mr Adams himself, for he was once interned and then convicted of attempting to escape from lawful custody.

On this occasion, however, he was trying to get in rather than trying to get out. A government official appeared on the other side of the chain-link fence, and several exchanges followed.

When it was finally established that, as everyone had expected, the gate would not be opened, the Sinn Fein delegation peeled away to give an impromptu press conference, followed by dozens of interviews.

John McGuinness remarked that it was the biggest media scrum he had ever seen.

"I can't believe how stupid they are," one Sinn Fein member said in wonderment of the Government. "Do you know," said another, "that the Northern Ireland Office has over 40 press officers? Think of the damage we could do with that."

Gerry Adams and Ian Paisley presumably went home last

night, put their feet up and reflected on a good day's tactical work. The Government people, licking their wounds, presumably reflected that Rome wasn't built in a day, that the worst of the pyrotechnics might have passed and that, hopefully, tomorrow is another day.

Major's message, page 2

  
**'We cannot afford to fail ... The hopes and expectations of very many people rest on the goodwill and negotiating skills and courage where necessary of the people involved in these particular talks'**

John Major

**'The talks offer the first chance for over 70 years for all involved, including those who have traditionally relied on physical force, to get round the same table to map out a future of peace, of justice, of hope'**

John Bruton

two governments to chair much of the talks was, Mr Paisley declared, "fully in the republican camp. If he's in, I'm out".

A Mitchell-Paisley meeting was hastily arranged, but the Democratic Unionist leader emerged from it with his earlier opinion intact. Thus it was that Mr Major, having made his

process. Then, with Sir Patrick in the chair, Mr Paisley and others tried to unpick the agenda thrashed out last week by London and Dublin. Mr Major's forecast that it could be long, difficult and demanding already rings true.

The Major and Bruton speeches were meant to be

as promised, led a large Sinn Fein team up to Stormont to demand entry to the talks. The largest media posse ever seen in Belfast recorded Mr Adams encountering gates secured with a padlock. They then filmed him circumventing this obstacle and making his way up to another set of gates.

and wrenched it off the amazed cameraman's shoulder. "Get off," said the shocked cameraman. But when he refused, the press officer tried to pull the wires off the back of the camera.

But the Sinn Fein retinue moved remorselessly on through the gates and headed

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**QUICKLY**  
**History of fraud**  
A huge art fraud, which is being investigated by Scotland Yard and which centres on the archives of the Tate Gallery, had been going for at least six years. The *Independent* has learned.

Page 2

**Deadly ceasefire**  
Hizbullah did not break the truce when it killed five Israeli troops; the Israelis did break it when they killed a Lebanese soldier: the truth is that there is no ceasefire. Robert Fisk, page 8

**Unhealthy habits**  
Being afraid of needles, the need to appear macho and failing to demand good health care means that six out of 10 British men are either not registered with a GP or have never visited their GP or don't know their doctor's name. Page 3

**£75m gift to nation**  
A British-born millionaire is to hand over a £75m collection of gold and silver as a gift to the British nation. Page 3

## Europeans savage Britain

SARAH HELM  
Brussels

"A huge letting off steam," was how one official described it. "A roasting," said another. "I have never seen anything like it. They were savaged," said a third, who had watched the European counter-attack on British ministers at Luxembourg yesterday.

It was a day of remarkable and unusually strong language. "Blackmail," declared other EU ministers, wagging fingers at Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary. "Paralysis of the union," said others. "Incomprehensible ... unacceptable." The temperature rose, and Mr Rifkind sat stony-faced and silent as they suggested that Britain was behaving illegally and that the "break-up" of the Union itself was nigh.

Jacques Santer, President of the European Commission, warned Britain at the weekend

that the moment of truth in the beef war was coming. Yesterday it seemed that the moment had arrived.

The day's proceedings had begun quickly enough. Europe's foreign ministers took their seats in the Luxembourg council room ready for what has become a familiar ritual: the reading of the British "reserve", a prelude to the announcement of further vetoes.

"I have to announce that the British government, for reasons well known to you all, is not in a position to approve points 11-25 on the agenda," began Stephen Wall, the UK's representative to the European Union. To date a total of 56 European policy decisions had been blocked. Now 16 more decisions were to be shelved, this time affecting EU relations with the rest of the world.

It was the burly Dutch foreign minister, Hans van Mierlo, who led the way. "The British say

they are suffering," he exclaimed. "But we are all suffering." There followed a ferocious and unprecedented attack by the 14 ministers.

Werner Hoyer, the German minister, said he feared for the future of European development. The great European projects, spearheaded by Germany—monetary union, enlargement—were threatened, he warned. "The British policy is a severe blow to European integration."

How could Britain justify a decision to block EU aid to Russia, just ahead of the Russian elections? asked other ministers. What was the purpose of the decision to block an EU statement criticising human rights in East Timor? This was "absurd", declared Portugal and Austria.

They scorned Mr Rifkind's "concessions": Britain had decided not to block a new association agreement with Slovakia and had backed away from blocking money for the election in Bosnia. But what right did Britain have to set the EU's agenda? "You cannot pick and choose," said Mr Van Mierlo.

For everyone in Luxembourg yesterday it was clear that the stakes in the beef war had now become intolerably high. Mr Rifkind, clearly shaken by the vitriol, tried to counter the attacks with some signs of conciliation. "The UK takes no pleasure in this," he insisted. "We share your strong desire to conclude this."

Yet as the dust settled last night there was no sign of a ceasefire. Mr Rifkind made clear that the blocking would continue until a framework for lifting the ban was in place. And the others made clear that that would not happen until Britain had decided, as Mr Santer put it, "to play fair".

EU in crisis, pages 6 and 7

150 من الأصل



Overweight, with loss of libido, failing eyesight and suffering from stress, the British male prefers to suffer than visit a doctor

## So macho, but so many men fit for nothing

GLENDY COOPER

You feel ill. You don't recognise the symptoms. You are in pain. What do you do?

The rational response would be to see the doctor. But according to the first national survey into men's attitudes to health, if you are male you will stock up at the chemist, frightened by reading medical books or gulp down dozens of vitamin pills – anything rather than visit your GP.

Fear of needles, the need to appear macho and failing to demand good health care in the way women have, has meant that men's health is suffering. While three-quarters of men worry about their health, the majority feel they cannot talk to their family doctor. Six out of ten are either not registered with a GP, have never visited their GP or do not know their doctor's name.

But the British male is in a poor state of health. Aware that beer bellies are not supremely attractive, the majority of men have tried to diet. Their greatest fears include weight increase, receding hairlines, loss of libido and failing eyesight and 13 per cent have resigned themselves to having cosmetic surgery in the future.

While men may think about sex every 10 minutes, on average, they have sex one-and-a-half times a week. Six out of ten said they were dissatisfied with their sex life and a quarter had some form of sexual problem.

Men live on average six years less than women and are 50 per cent more likely to die before the age of 65. Deaths from coronary heart disease are twice those of women and 75 per cent of suicide victims are men.

However, many common male health problems such as prostate cancer, testicular cancer, infertility and cancer of the colon, could be dealt with if detected and treated early. Testicular cancer – one of the most common cancers in men aged 15 to 34 – is 95 per cent curable when detected early.

But men continue to neglect their health with the main reason being plain fear, according to a survey of 5,000 men carried out by *Men's Health* magazine. One-third of all men admitted they were nervous of medical procedures. The rest claimed that doctors "lack compassion" and tried to self-diagnose with

### Insights on the male dilemma

- Seven out of ten men feel under stress.
- Only 13 per cent of men think they are very healthy.
- Sixty-five per cent say they visit the chemist rather than their GP when they feel ill.
- Four per cent of men think they are very attractive.
- Six out of ten men are not satisfied with their sex life and a quarter say they have had a sexual problem.

### Four fitness tips for the modern man

1. Get married. Nearly two thirds of men in a relationship found it less stressful than living alone. Interestingly, however, the reverse is true for women.
2. Indulge in aerobic exercise. This need not involve gyms; it can simply mean clearing the bathroom vigorously. Or many other things: the junior health minister Baroness Cumberlege likes chasing bullocks around a field.
3. Eat spicy foods to speed up your metabolism. If desperate, turn to sushi at lunchtime rather than sandwiches.
4. Have children. They may be exhausting, but they keep you moving.

### Four things best avoided

1. Passive football. Sitting on the sofa with cans of beer watching Euro '96 may be fun. But it is bad for the waistline, digestion and temper.
2. Kebabs, particularly eaten on the move. 23 per cent of men have suffered serious indigestion in the last six months.
3. Work-related boozing: drinking with office chums after work every night cannot always be put down to "making contacts".
4. Being a traditional Scot: they are among the least fit Britons. Nor is this wholly down to whisky and cigarettes: the deep-fried Men's bar was invented at Stonehaven near Aberdeen.

the help of medical books rather than visit a surgery.

Most men thought they were reasonably healthy and were able to identify unhealthy high-fat and sugar foods. This was not translated into real life, with salad and fruit coming bottom of the list of favourite foods.

Stress was blamed for taking its toll on men's health with worries about work, money and relationships common. Seven out of ten men said they suffered from stress.

Cary Cooper, professor of organisational psychology at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, puts this down to men's insecurity about their role in the world. "Women seem to know where they are going, they have a sense of clarity about what their goals are which men don't," he said. "Men are also more vulnerable because they are not as flexible in the workplace. Women have a history of working part time or on short term contracts which is what employers want. Men feel their role is being displaced by women."

## Cut-price paracetamol in Asda's war on drug prices

LOUISE JURY

Supermarket giant Asda slashed the cost of one popular brand of paracetamol yesterday, in the latest round of its law-breaking war on drug price-fixing.

It halved the price of a pack of 24 Anadin Paracetamol from £1.72 to 86p, in a move which was condemned by manufacturers and pharmacists for breaching long-standing Resale Price Maintenance (RPM) laws designed to ensure the survival of small pharmacies as a public service.

The pharmacists immediately called on Asda to reverse the measure until an Office of Fair Trading (OFT) inquiry into RPM reports later this year. Whitechapel Laboratories, Anadin's manufacturers, said it was considering bringing legal action.

But Gwynn Burr, Asda's marketing director, said: "We can't sell this straightforward commodity product at this price with a straight face."

The margins on Anadin Paracetamol are amongst the highest available to any retailer in Britain. They rank along-

side high fashion and expensive perfume."

The mark-up on over-the-counter drugs and vitamins amounted to a £300m hidden tax on the British consumer every year, he added.

Asda launched its campaign against the RPM laws last October by cutting the cost of 82 well-known brands of vitamins and minerals by up to 20 per cent.

It was forced to put the prices up again two weeks later, after an injunction was served by manufacturers Seven Seas and Roche. The legal prompt led the OFT investigation.

A Whiteball Laboratories spokesman said the company believed it was the "responsibility of every interested party to await the outcome of the OFT review... before taking any action".

Tim Astill, director of the National Pharmaceutical Association of 12,000 pharmacists, said members believed Asda's action threatened the survival of small pharmacists, because they could not offer such discounts, even if they were legal.

"This would deprive millions of people of access not only to a full range of medicines but also to a convenient source of health-care advice and a dispensary for their prescriptions. It would especially hit the less mobile."

He was also concerned that Asda described paracetamol as a "mundane health aid".

"Paracetamol can be dangerous if too much is taken. Discounting to make people buy more shows a reckless disregard on the part of Asda for the safety of its customers."

David Dickenson, who investigates drugs prices for the Consumers' Association, said there was increasing evidence that the cost of medicines was putting people off buying them. Anything that made them more affordable for more people was good news.

He wondered whether the RPM was necessary to support pharmacies. "The question is... whether consumers paying artificially high prices for medicines is the best way to keep a high street service in medicines and advice going."

Phillip Evans, the associa-

tion's senior policy advisor, said supermarkets reported a 100 per cent mark-up on RPM medicines, compared with 20 per cent on groceries, although the National Pharmaceutical Association claimed only a 30 per cent margin existed on its goods.

Mr Evans challenged the motives of those supporting the RPM. The smallest independent pharmacists won 70 per cent of their revenue from prescriptions which were not affected by the agreement, he argued, and manufacturers stood to lose out if the laws which allowed them to dictate prices were abolished.

RPM laws also covered books until last year, when the collapse of the Net Book Agreement under pressure from Asda and publishers signalled the unofficial end of price-fixing in the market. This is expected to be ratified by the courts.

Although some of the prices of some books tumbled, the expected revival in trade did not take place and some publishers subsequently reported a fall in profits.

Somerset House, in the Strand, designed by Sir William Chambers, is one of London's most important Enlightenment buildings. It currently houses the Inland Revenue and the Royal Court of Justice, along with other Government departments and the Courtauld Institute.

It is hoped the new galleries will be ready for the millennium. Until then it is hoped to tour parts of the Gilbert Collection through the UK.

Mr Gilbert was given a guided tour of Somerset House last week and saw the Central Hall which would be the main focus of the exhibit. The scheme would mean that public records archives stored in the building would be moved to Sheffield.



Three-quarters of men worry about their health, but the majority feel they cannot talk to their GP

Photograph: Philip Meech

## Liquid-lunchers versus the iron-pumpers

CLARE GARNER

One in three men in Britain admitted to have taken time off work to escape stress an average of five days a year. Given the choice, however, three-quarters of men said they would rather go out to work than stay and look after the house.

The ones who were most content with their lives were married or in a long-term relationship. Nearly two-thirds living with someone found it less stressful than living alone.

"Men are much worse at coping with stress," said Professor Cooper. "They don't have the same social support systems. They would rather go out drinking than talk about their problems. They see stress as a sign of weakness and will not admit they are under pressure."

The Health Education Authority is launching a series of initiatives this summer at football clubs and in the armed forces to try and get men to take their health seriously. And as part of Men's Health Week a temporary information helpline was launched yesterday by PFP Healthcare on 0800 335555.

ing to a GP. A lot of times, going is a waste of time. If I had "flu I would just go to the chemist and get some Night Nurse, rather than queue up for two hours," said the 35-year-old banker, all set to heave another weight to the sky at Holmes Place Health Club in the City.

While John Cuthbert, 47, an accountant, is well aware of the benefits of getting a handle on his health (he hasn't had a day off sick since he started going to the gym every lunchtime three years ago) regular screening is out of the question. "No, I wouldn't go for a check-up. I don't think they are necessary. I know my heart's all right and I'm not that worried about myself."

In the smoke-filled Lord Raglan pub down the road, men are downing Guinness

with as much gusto as their fitness friends are pumping iron.

But raise the subject of health and they look sheepish, their consciences pricked.

Mike Harris, an IT consultant in the City, worries about his health. He even subscribes to *Men's Health* magazine.

But that doesn't stop him smoking and drinking his way through his lunch break. "At my sort of age you have to consider how you're going to stay healthy. *Men's Health* has useful articles on everything from the old prostate

problems to you name it. I've heard you can go to a well man clinic, but I don't know how to get in touch with one. If I did, I'd probably go for a check-up."

Likewise, he would like to

take more exercise, but can't find the time or money. "I want to do it... it's finding the time to do it. It costs £2,000 to £3,000 a year to join a squash club or a gym in the City, so it doesn't seem worth it."

Swanning himself outside, Peter O'Hagan is the exception. Sound in wind and limb, Mr O'Hagan, an investment banker, believes he will stay that way. "I don't really worry about my health. I'm healthy as far as I know," said Mr O'Hagan, 29, an investment banker.

"I know all this thing about cancer and so forth but my family are all smokers. The last member of my family to die, my grandfather, was 95 and he had smoked all his life."

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## Millionaire gifts Britain gold and silverware collection worth £75m

PETER VICTOR

A British-born millionaire is to hand over a £75m collection of gold and silver as a gift to the British nation.

Last night Michael Heseltine, the deputy prime minister announced that £15.5m from the National Lottery will be used to refurbish Somerset House, in London, where the works will be displayed.

The Gilbert Collection will be the largest ever gift of works of art to the nation. It includes gold and silverware, gold boxes and micro-mosaics – ornaments covered in tiny mosaic patterns – collected by Mr Gilbert over the past 27 years. Born in Golders Green,

north London, and now living in Los Angeles, Mr Gilbert made his millions from property development.

His collection includes pieces which were regarded as serious losses to this nation's heritage when they were exported. Until now it has been housed in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California, but Mr Gilbert said it had outgrown the space available.

Mr Gilbert was in England yesterday to sign a provisional agreement document with Michael Heseltine to seal the transfer although final details have yet to be worked out. He said he was delighted his collection was coming to England. "I always love England."

Announcing the gift Mr Heseltine said yesterday: "This is a remarkable act of generosity. It's one of the most important collections of gold and silver in the world. It's a unique collection and for it to be housed in Somerset House is tremendous for the people who have always wanted to see Somerset House opened up in the way it's going to be and have a collection of this quality."

He added that the £15.5m lottery grant would be very useful in refurbishing the Terrace Building, the section of Somerset House where the collection will be housed.

Work smarter  
not just harder

## news



Making a splash: Maureen Braithwaite and Wills Morgan on the lake at Kenwood House, Hampstead, north London, where they will be starring in Gershwin's opera *Porgy and Bess* as part of the English Heritage open-air concert season, which opens on Saturday. Photograph: Philip Meech



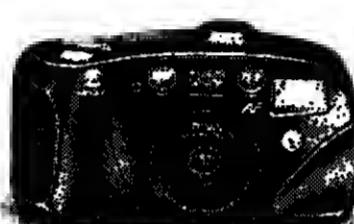
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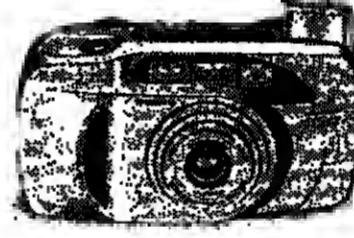
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## GP reforms to revive cottage hospital care

**NICHOLAS TIMMINS**  
Public Policy Editor

The most radical changes in 50 years to the way family doctor services are organised and delivered were trailed yesterday by Stephen Dorrell, the Secretary of State for Health.

They could mean the revival and development of new-style "cottage hospitals" with X-ray, diagnostics, day surgery and respite beds which could provide a wide range of additional services from physiotherapy and pharmacy to mental health and care for the elderly. Private finance is likely to be used to develop them. Over time, nurses and others would be likely to gain more prescribing rights.

More GPs could be salaried, working for community trusts or partnerships, rather than operating as at present as independent contractors. Some could split their contract between day

and night services, ending the traditional 24-hour responsibility of GPs for their patients.

The traditional boundary between money for hospital and community services and that for primary care could go with health care being funded from a single budget. That would make easier the transfer of new technologies and resources out of hospitals and into primary care - and might eventually lead to a Treasury ambition of a single, cash-limited budget for all

care. The changes would be undertaken, he said, on a voluntary basis, going ahead only where there was "professional support" for testing them and "without removing the option of continuing to practice within the current arrangements".

Mr Dorrell's approach lets him escape negotiating a new contract with the increasingly restless GPs this side of the general election. Should Labour win, it also avoids binding them to a rigid set of changes.

The GP's traditional role as "gatekeeper" to the rest of the NHS must remain, the document says. Services must be developed against principles of quality, fairness, accessibility, responsiveness and efficiency, including clinical effectiveness.

The aim is to "keep the traditional strengths of general practice" while allowing "more flexibility and greater choice" in the way services are delivered, particularly given the unacceptable variation in how well primary care is delivered around the country.

The shift from imposing changes to piloting and negotiating them was welcomed by the British Medical Association and health authorities. Dr Ian Bogle, the BMA's GPs' chairman, said he was glad ministers had listened to family doctors' worries about growing workload, unnecessary bureaucracy and worsening morale and recruitment problems. Any changes, however, would have to be "adequately resourced".

**Primary Care: The Future**, NHS Executive. Copies from 0800 555777.

## Labour set to cool on workers' rights

**BARRIE CLEMENT**  
Labour Editor

In the teeth of union opposition Labour is expected to water down its commitment to give employees the right to appeal against unfair dismissal.

While a party law recently backed a law to give protection to workers from "day one", Labour working parties are set to amend the proposal.

Faced with arguments that the industrial tribunal system could not cope with all the claims, Labour is likely to revert to a system where employees will have to work for six months before qualifying.

In a keynote speech at the GMB general union's annual conference in Blackpool yesterday, John Prescott, Labour's deputy leader, cut out a reference to giving rights from the first day of employment. He later said that nothing should be read into the omission, but senior party figures are known to favour the six-month option. John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB, declared that

he would strongly oppose any attempt to tone down Labour's policy. "It would mean employers like Burger King would start using five-month contracts and if the statutory period was a month it would come down to three weeks," he said yesterday.

"If an employer takes someone on as an employee then that should immediately confer rights on that particular employee."

He said that the policy stipulating immediate protection had not been rescinded and the arguments in favour of it were "overwhelming".

Meanwhile leaders of "new Labour" were warned yesterday not to go over the heads of the big unions in forging relationships with employers.

Mr Edmonds said unions should provide the link between the party and industry. Labour's ideas of social partnership was "not just an ideal for the future", it was already a reality for the GMB. He said unions provided a "gateway for employers to talk to and understand the Labour Party's plans for the world of work".

### DAILY POEM

**Sheol**

By Craig Raine

*A Polish midwife was assisting at my birth.  
And I gave birth to a beautiful girl.  
There on the stones. In my own filth.  
No soap. No cotton wool. Without hot water.*

*I went to my cot. No mattress, just a cover.  
And in the morning, Mengèle.  
My breasts were bandaged up:  
to see how long a new-born lives*

*deprived of food. I had no choice.  
Each day I chewed my bread  
and wrapped it in a scrap of cloth  
I soaked in soup. A peasant dummy.*

*With this I fed my child. My God.  
The child lost weight  
and every day came Mengèle.  
Soon she had no strength to cry.*

*She only whimpered, and my milk got up.  
I couldn't give her anything.  
Except, about the sixth or seventh day,  
the syringe of morphine.*

*Cut slanted like a quill.  
And warm from Mata Steinberg's hand.  
I can understand ghosts.  
How they have to come back*

*What it costs to return  
through the bricks of a house.  
Eyes tight shut.  
Weeping, broken skin.*

Craig Raine was born in 1944 and educated at Exeter College, Oxford. Editor of *Quarto* in 1979 and subsequently Poetry Editor at New College, Oxford. *Clay. Whereabouts Unknown*, (Penguin, £7.99) from which this poem is taken, is his first volume of poems in 10 years. Previous collections include *A Martian Sends a Postcard Home* (1979) and *Rich* (1984).

# Forgeries find easy access to art market

A leading 'copyist' reveals to **Rebecca Fowler** how simple it is to fake it in the art world

The easiest paintings in the world to forge are modern British masters, says a leading 'copyist' who makes an honest living from recreating works and pastiches of the greatest names in art history.

Leo Stevenson, 38, has emulated artists from Vermeer to Monet and Magritte. He is also expert in the processes used to create a false provenance for a work and the materials that would render the final product convincing.

According to Stevenson, painters have become less technically challenging with time. The Impressionists are in turn easier than the Old Masters, while contemporary art is the most easy to imitate, although they still demand a degree of skill.

Even Ben Nicholson, who is more 'painterly' than most, would not be relatively unchallengeable than many, and you'd need to know more about tone and colour and paint. But it would be like falling off a log compared to one of the Dutch masters," Stevenson said.

He added: "But a work of art is only as good as its provenance, so a forger's main task is always the creation of relevant documents. This is often far harder to do convincingly than the creation of the artwork. With modern artists, the amount of information you need is relatively small."

Stevenson protects his own works from being mistook for the genuine article with invisible sign-offs that would be picked up by X-ray. His latest work, a copy of *The Concert* by Vermeer, which took him 700 hours to paint, includes the words "Elvis Lives" underneath the title.

But he is aware exactly how the unscrupulous would create a painting from nothing to sell as an authentic work.

The first objective is to find a canvas from the right period through trawling auction houses, stripping it of paint, while it still has the correct marks on the back.

The forger would then choose a subject that the original artist had either used in a series of paintings, like Monet who painted endless versions of

the same thing, or they would focus on a gap in the artist's life. The Vermeer forgeries of the 1940s, for example, were based on the most obscure part of his career.

Stevenson said: "Unless you are a genius, you are never going to get into the soul of the person. But if the artist did a whole series of something, it's not hard to slip an extra one in. Or if it's something the artist was known to have done, without much detail, the bait is already on the hook."

Once the copy or pastiche has been finished, the question is how much scrutiny it will stand. While Old Masters can be tested for chemical changes in the paint, using X-ray and gas layer chromatography, the more recent works are still too young.

A number of paintings that are more than 100 years old and were presented as the works of masters have been revealed using fluorescence X-ray to be the work of minor painters. While the paintings were clearly old, the signatures glowed luminously, revealing they were additions.

Among the other additions Stevenson has made to his own pastiches include the words "Benedict" - the cloak of a figure in a work that might be mistaken for a Franz Hals, and his copy of Canaletto's *Venetian Lagoon* conceals a submarine lurking beneath the first layer of paint.

Stevenson is convinced that until the art market is prepared to wake up to the possibility of forgeries, it will remain a relatively easy art for those who practise it.

Once something is in writing, in the catalogue or the archive, it is phenomenal the ease with which people will accept it is genuine. It's a bit like telling people out to believe everything they read in the newspapers, only ten times worse. They can be so gullible," he said.

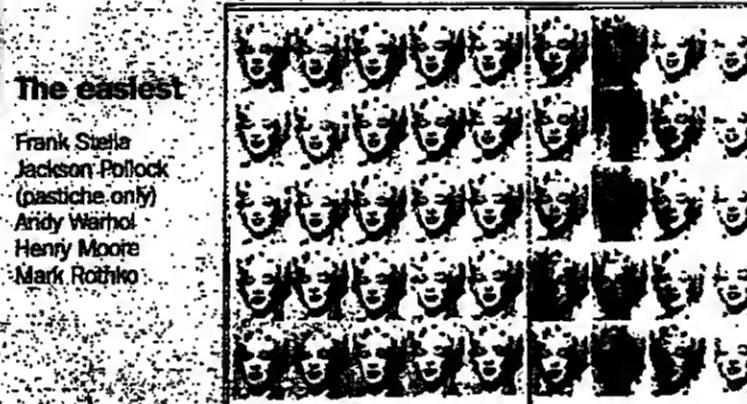
But for those of us who practise copying and pastiche honestly, it is no different to a classical musician who plays someone else's music and who can get a great deal of pleasure from that. It's half-way between 'academy' and pure artistry - and it is honest."



Master copier: Leo Stevenson with some of the paintings he has recreated, complete with invisible sign-offs.

Photograph: Colin McIlroy

From the Old Masters to contemporary art - the copyists' guide to the gallery



Andy Warhol's *Marilyn Diptych*. Copyright: ARS, NY



Raphael



Rembrandt's *Portrait of Thomas Wentworth*. Trustees of Weston Park Foundation

**David Lister** examines the rise of pastiching as a successful modern day art form

Those who can, paint. Those who can and want to make money, pastiche. The most overheard snippet of conversation in any self-respecting modern art gallery is: "But I could have done that." Behind the phrase is an art form.

Pastiching is widespread, both in its respectable, highly-skilled and lucrative guise and in its illegal, fraudulent and also lucrative guise that *Independent* investigations have uncovered. Even the same pasticheur has a borrowed-from-Montmartre feel. If pasticheurs seem to be multiplying, it could be because some 20th-century art has proved a relatively easy number to pastiche.

In the late 1960s, American researchers fed the details of paintings by Paul Klee into a computer programmed to detect patterns in shapes and colours. After analysing the paintings, the computer was able to generate more "school of Klee" originals. Prints of the genuine Klee and the machine Klee were then given to art students to see if they could tell which were which. The results showed that they could not.

When they were asked to interpret the paintings, they found no difficulty in doing so if they were told one had been produced by a human hand, but when told a picture was computer-generated, they said that no interpretation was possible. Oddly, despite that success, computers have been only sparingly used in pastiching famous artists.

Questioning art students and drawing experts, a shortlist of artists ripe for pastiching emerges. Jean Miro's flat, spotty, childlike shapes were cited frequently. Rothko's blurred, soft discs of colour were another popular choice.

But the success of installation art means that copyists and pasticheurs are also having to adjust. Contemporary pastiche needs less of an eye for stylistic idiosyncrasies than hitherto. But it does demand contacts. If you can cultivate the chap at the local slaughter house for a dead cow, and chat up the security guard at the morgue for a tub of formaldehyde...

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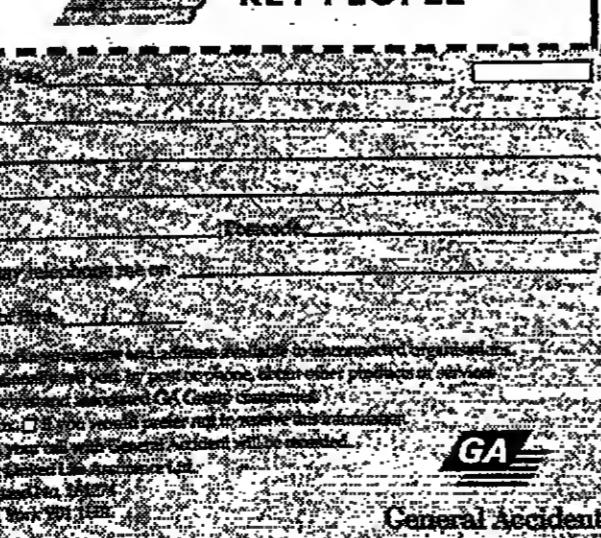
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# europe

**Crisis in Europe:** Right-wingers in meeting with Sir James Goldsmith pledge to back Bill Cash on eve of crucial vote

## 100 rebel MPs to defy Major on referendum

DONALD MACINTYRE,  
COLIN BROWN and  
JOHN RENTOUL

Up to 100 Tory MPs are expected to take part in a show of strength by Euro-sceptics today in the Commons in a move which will make it more difficult for John Major to retreat from the policy of non-cooperation in Europe.

The Prime Minister will risk facing a rebellion by seeking sup-

port for his European strategy in a Commons debate next week before the European Union summit in Florence at the end of the month. It was seen last night as an attempt to reunite the party.

Tory MPs will today defy their whips by voting for a Bill introduced by Bill Cash, a long-term opponent of the Government's approach to Europe.

Calling for a referendum on moves towards a federal Europe.

The vote is likely to underline the growing support among Tory backbenchers for the Prime Minister's tough stand over the beef ban in Europe.

The Ulster Unionist leader, David Trimble, has thrown his weight behind the Bill, in a warning to keep his party on board if Mr Major wishes to maintain its support in a confidence vote.

The Bill has no chance of reaching the statute book, but

the extent of the support will further alarm the pro-European Tory MPs who have been effective in lobbying the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind, to soften his blocking policy in Europe by rewarding those countries who support lifting the ban on British beef.

The pro-Euro MPs want Mr Major to call an end to the blocking action before the Florence summit, but today's vote will make it clear to the Prime Minister that he could face trouble from more than half the Tory backbench if he retreats without a convincing victory.

The rebels' numbers were

being swelled last night after a warning by leading Euro-sceptics that their only hope of averting a challenge by Sir James Goldsmith's Referendum Party was to back Mr Cash's Bill.

That became clear as Norman Lamont, the former Chancellor, and other senior Tories, including Mr Cash, joined Sir James at a meeting of the Conservative Philosophy Group at the home of Jonathan Aitken, the former Treasury minister.

John Redwood, a leading Euro-sceptic, refused an invitation on the grounds that it would discuss the prospects for withdrawal from the EU. Mr Redwood said he was in favour of a "single market, not a single state", but was not seeking withdrawal.

One Euro-sceptic said yesterday that a vote for Mr Cash was a "necessary but not sufficient" condition of persuading Sir James not to field candidates in an MP's constituency.

Members of the Philosophy Group heard a presentation of the arguments for and against Britain leaving the EU from Mr Lamont. Regular attendees at meetings of the group of fashionably right-wing politicians, journalists and academics include David Davis, the Europe minister, Ian Duncan-Smith, the Euro-sceptic MP, Paul Johnson, the journalist, and Roger Scruton, the right-wing thinker.



From left: Labour's Austin Mitchell, Dennis Skinner; Tory Teddy Taylor, Teresa Gorman

## Old guard's stand on withdrawal gains favour

JOHN RENTOUL  
Political Correspondent

Now that the taboo on discussing the option of Britain pulling out of the European Union has been broken, the old guard of anti-Europeans find their long-neglected arguments suddenly respectable.

William Waldegrave, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, triggered the latest wave of speculation that this could become an issue at Cabinet level when he said 10 days ago: "Of course Britain could be outside the EU if it wanted to be."

It turned out that he was in fact only stating the obvious rather than saying, as some MPs are in private, he felt Britain had nearly come to the position where withdrawal should seri-

ously be contemplated. That is what Norman Lamont and Jonathan Aitken said after they left the Government.

The hacking of former Cabinet heavyweight means that the "Westminster Eight" are beginning to march out of the wilderness. The eight Tory MPs, who were excluded from the parliamentary party for six months until a year ago, are currently on tour speaking on platforms entitled "In or Out?"

All eight argue that Britain should leave the EU. Five have declared that Britain should leave immediately, including Sir Teddy Taylor and Sir Richard Body, who rebelled against the whip to vote against going into the European Economic Community in 1971, but also more recently elected MPs

such as Teresa Gorman. The other three say that Britain should first try to renegotiate the terms of its membership.

On the Labour side of the

House, membership of the Labour Common Market Safeguards Committee is still falling,

but it has resolved itself the Labour Euro Safeguards Campaign and stepped up its activities.

The group gave up campaigning explicitly for Britain to pull out of the EU some years ago, but is now divided over whether it should now start again. Austin Mitchell, MP for the fishing port of Grimsby, is also a patron of the Campaign for an Independent Britain. And Dennis Skinner has consistently opposed Britain's membership of the EU through all his party's changes.



James Goldsmith: Meeting with leading Euro-sceptics

Photograph: Edward Webb

## 'Crazy' policy threat to fish

Fisheries minister Tony Baldry yesterday hit out at Europe's "crazy" fishing policy, which he said was a licence to foreign boats to plunder Britain's precious national stocks.

He warned the Brussels Commission that British agreement to slim down the trawler fleet on conservation grounds was out of the question while "quota hopping" continued.

The Government is still smarting from a European Court ruling, which outlawed measures to keep UK fish in British hands.

The judges effectively sanctioned companies being set up in the UK by other EU trawlers, mostly Spanish.

This enables them to qualify for British licences and a share in Britain's quota of European fish stocks.

Mr Baldry is insisting on a remedy to keep out the foreigners, with changes to the EU treaty if necessary.

"Fishing is not part of the single market. We have national quotas and they should be for national fishermen," he said, following talks with fellow European Union fisheries ministers in Luxembourg.

"We have the ludicrous situation of Spanish boats with Spanish crews and Spanish skippers leaving Spanish ports to fish in our waters and then returning to port to land our fish. It comes off the UK quota, not their own. It has to be stopped," he declared.

Until a halt is called, Mr Baldry says the further belt-tightening demanded by Brussels, a minimum 40-per-cent reduction in the size of the 10,000-strong British trawler fleet, is "wholly unacceptable and wholly unsustainable".

Only about 150 foreign-owned vessels are involved in British waters but they take a substantial share of the UK's annual quota: forty-six per cent of hake, 29 per cent of mackerel, 44 per cent of plaice and 18 per cent of sole have gone abroad.

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Nearly 50 new compounds for cancer treatment or diagnosis are now on trial in the UK and each costs around £200 million to research and develop.

The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry has produced a booklet which describes some of the latest advances made by British-based pharmaceutical companies in the search for new medicines.

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A picture of health for generations

**Crisis in Europe:** Foreign ministers pass verdicts on British intransigence as Government gets tough on use of banned foodstuff



**Ministers:**  
The European Union faces a risk of paralysis as a result of the British intransigence. Their policy poses a severe blow to the future of European integration," said Mr Royce, referring to the UK's continuing hopes for membership to expand and to play a single currency role in the political union.

**André Santini, Spanish Foreign Minister:**  
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**Wolfgang von der Borch, Dutch Foreign Minister:**  
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**Torle Helmer, Finnish Foreign Minister:**  
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**Jack Pocock, Foreign Minister of Luxembourg:**  
The European Union faces a risk of paralysis as a result of the British intransigence. Their policy poses a severe blow to the future of European integration," said Mr Royce, referring to the UK's continuing hopes for membership to expand and to play a single currency role in the political union.

#### WHEN BRITAIN GAVE THE RED LIGHT

Most of the measures Britain has blocked are uncontroversial decisions or proposals that Britain had actually intended to support before John Major announced the non-co-operation policy.

Indeed, the blocked measures, now numbering over 70, show the EU going about its business in a rather haphazard, routine fashion. Where, one wonders, is the threat to national libraries?

Some of the EU's most important blocked business concerns measures against terrorism and drug-trafficking. These are areas where Britain has been demanding strong action.

Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, noted last week that the Government's policy meant that at a meeting of EU justice ministers he would have to block some "useful measures, many of which we broadly support".

On Britain's national interest, according to the Government, lies in not doing things we want to do, and doing nothing we would not have refused to do anyway. Has somebody in the Tory party been reading Lewis Carroll? Tony Barber

Among the 70 measures blocked:

- A proposal to combat illegal employment of immigrants in the EU
- A recommendation to promote equal treatment for women seeking senior jobs in business
- A plan to grant more spot-check powers for EU anti-trust inspectors
- EU participation in an international law enforcement academy
- A conclusion that the Commission should continue producing demographic studies
- A motion declaring 1997 the European Year against Racism
- The 1997 budget for the Drugs Unit of Europe
- A plan to maintain low sales taxes on Dutch cut flowers
- Steps to create law enforcement "centres of excellence" for tackling terrorism
- A decision to harmonize training certificates in EU

Measures that Britain has let through:

- An EU association agreement with Slovenia

## Use of animal feed to be illegal

**NICHOLAS SCHOON and PAUL FIELD**

Possession of animal feeds made partly from farm animals is to become a criminal offence in the Government's latest attempt to eradicate BSE from cattle and end the EU ban on British beef.

Farmers, the feed manufacturers and merchants are all being contacted by the Ministry of Agriculture and told to get rid of any remaining feed which contains products from sheep, cattle or pigs carcasses.

Provided they register by June 26, the material will be collected from them free of charge and dumped in land-fill sites. Announcing the move yesterday, Junior Agriculture Minister Angela Browning said the Government estimated up to 20,000 tonnes of potentially contaminated feed were still in storage in England and Wales.

Ministers intend that from August 1, anyone retaining any of the feed will face a fine of up to £5,000 for a first offence and up to one month in jail for a second.

BSE spread in cattle because their feed contains large quantities of processed cattle remains along with cereals and other plant food. These cattle remains contain the disease-causing agent, a mutant protein. Use of such feeds for cattle was banned in 1988, but today large quantities of cows born long after this ban came into effect are still developing the disease. About 27,000 born since 1988 have developed symptoms and been destroyed.

The Government believed the epidemic continued because the ban was defied by

some and because cattle remains which continued to be used in poultry and pig feed was still entering feed by mistake.

In April this year, soon after Government scientists linked BSE with several cases of a new type of Creutzfeld-Jakob Disease the Government banned the use of any mammal protein and bone meal in food for livestock, fish and horses.

Meanwhile the Environment Agency dismissed claims that possible BSE-infected material from effluent could contaminate land and water supplies because of flaws in the rendering process.

Dr Alan Colchester, a consultant neurologist, warned that effluent discharged from rendering plants could reach humans through water supplies and called for the regulations to be tightened.

His comments centred on Canterbury Mills, a rendering plant in Godmersham, near Canterbury, and one of nine sites licensed to process cattle from the 30 month cull, which discharges the liquid effluent through pipes on to surrounding land as fertiliser.

Rendering plants remove fat from the carcass, known as tallow, and then grind down the remains to a powder form. As meat and bone meal are banned from cattle feed, the Intervention Board, overseeing the cull, intends to incinerate or bury it.

However the Environment Agency permits the effluent left from the process - blood and bodily fluids - to be discharged into sewers or onto land. The agency has visited Canterbury Mills on a daily basis over recent weeks and is satisfied with its standards.

## Critics query CJD in girl, 15

**CHARLES ARTHUR**  
Science Correspondent

Doubt surrounds the diagnosis of the fatal Creutzfeld-Jakob Disease (CJD) in a 15-year-old girl being treated in a Glasgow hospital.

The experimental test used to make the diagnosis has previously only been used on older people, and its accuracy might be affected by other viral diseases that can occur in young people, says James Ironside, deputy director of the National CJD Surveillance Unit in Edinburgh.

If CJD is confirmed, the girl would be one of the youngest recorded victims in the world. Her youth also makes it highly likely that she has the "new strain" of CJD - thought by scientists to be linked to exposure to mad cow disease, or BSE.

However, the only way to confirm the diagnosis would be to remove a small sample of brain tissue - a procedure which the Southern General Hospital said it has ruled out.

The test used to make the diagnosis was developed by Dr

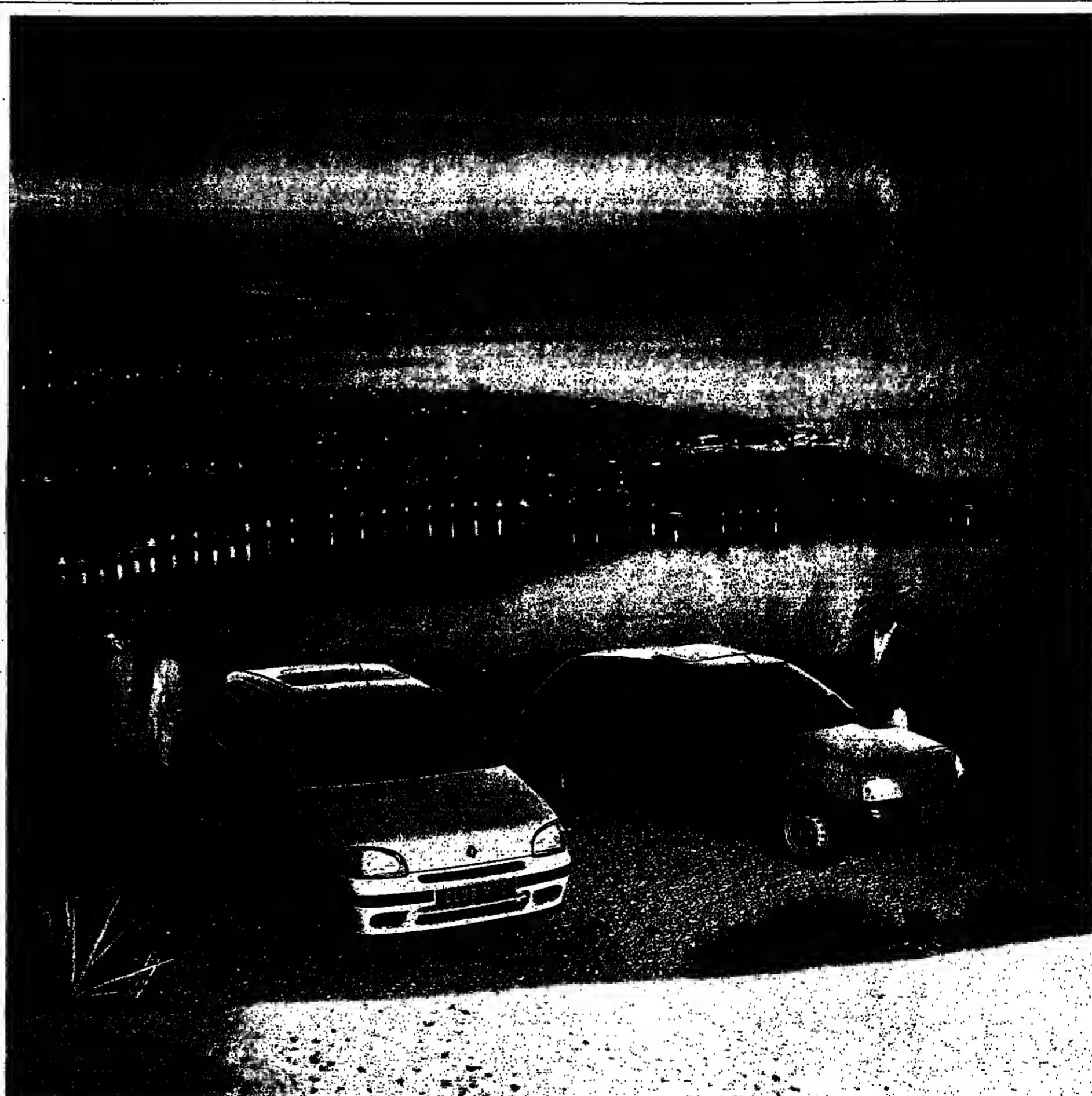
Robert Harrington at the California Institute of Technology. It does highlights the presence of proteins caused by brain cell damage - such as would occur in CJD - in spinal fluid.

Various other viral brain diseases could generate the same proteins, says Dr Ironside. "It's a very interesting test, but there might be other reasons why the patient would test positive, and those would have to be screened out."

The CJD Surveillance Unit and the Department of Health maintain that CJD can only be diagnosed definitely either from a brain biopsy or post-mortem examination.

The girl was diagnosed as having CJD in April by Professor Peter Behan, of the Institute of Neurology at Glasgow's Southern General Hospital.

A hospital spokesman said yesterday: "There are neurologists in the Institute who would say that without a biopsy, it's impossible to accurately diagnose CJD while a person is alive." He added that Professor Behan "is perfectly entitled to his view" in making the diagnosis.



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## international

**Lebanese carnage:** Death of five more soldiers shows Israel will continue to pay dearly for occupation zone.

# Hizbollah killings blow truce to shreds

ROBERT FISK  
Beirut

In the most devastating attack staged by the Hizbollah inside southern Lebanon this year, five Israeli occupation troops were killed yesterday and another six wounded. However, the guerrillas appear to have stayed within the terms of the ceasefire accord, which Shimon Peres's government agreed six weeks ago. By contrast, the Israelis seem to have broken the agreement when they retaliated for yesterday's assault by firing 80 shells across Lebanon, killing a Lebanese army sergeant and wounding three civilians. As a Lebanese friend put it a few hours after Israel's latest losses in Lebanon: "The ceasefire is holding - the fighting continues."

In reality, of course, there is no ceasefire. The unsigned paper that Israel, Syria, Lebanon and the United States approved to allow Mr Peres to escape his bloody Lebanese adventure six weeks ago is already ignored by both sides. The much-trumpeted US-French-Syrian-Israeli-Lebanese ceasefire "monitoring group" is non-existent.

The State Department, so the Lebanese have been informed, has even told Israel that it does not have to abide by the terms of the truce but can "hit back" whenever it wants if its soldiers are attacked in occupied southern Lebanon.

Yesterday, it did just that. It was 5.30am when the Hizbollah men inside the Israeli occupation zone in southern Lebanon attacked a patrol returning from the artillery compound on a hilltop at Dubos, firing at them with heavy machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades.

Some reports said that the Hizbollah continued firing with Israeli-made mortars, weapons that were given to the Lebanese Phalange militia who fought for Israel during the 1975-90 civil war but who later sold their armament to the highest bidder - and that the battle lasted for at least an hour. Within minutes, Israeli artillery had opened fire at villages east of Nabatia, killing the Lebanese soldier

who was stationed at an army checkpoint outside the town and wounding the three civilians. In all, the Israelis fired 80 shells into the Nabatia area.

UN troops described the initial attack, which the Hizbollah claimed was further retaliation for the Israeli massacre of civilians at Qana on 18 April, as a "major confrontation".

The offensive, the bloodiest since Binyamin Netanyahu won the Israeli election by promising increased "security" for Israelis, means that the prime minister-elect in his first days in office will confront the same military problem as his predecessor, Mr Peres: the cost of occupying one tenth of Lebanon, while maintaining any resistance to that occupation constitutes "terrorism".

It is a price that is likely to climb much higher, and which threatens to plunge Lebanon into another bloody confrontation with Israel.

We may have to wait a little longer for "Operation Grapes of Wrath Part 2" but the "ceasefire's" track record shows all too clearly how damaging is the Hizbollah's war against Israeli occupation. A glance at the events of the past 10 days also shows just how preposterous were the original terms of the truce. On 30 May, even as Israeli votes were still being counted, two command-detonated bombs in the occupied town of Marjayoun killed four Israeli soldiers, including a colonel, and wounded another seven and a Lebanese militiaman in Israel's proxy South Lebanon Army.

This appeared to breach a clause in the ceasefire agreement, which stipulated that "civilian areas ... will not be used as launching grounds for attack." But Marjayoun is inside the occupied zone and may not have been considered a civilian area. Since a local journalist was also wounded by the second bomb, however, this was a violation of the truce.

Next day, Israeli planes bombed a Hizbollah arms dump near Basileia, almost 70 miles from Marjayoun, wounding three Lebanese civilians, an



Photograph: Reuter

## Guerrillas make presence felt in blood

PATRICK COCKBURN  
Jerusalem

Israel has seldom been fortunate in Lebanon. It was in an early foray across the Lebanese border against the Vichy French in 1941 that Moshe Dayan, Israel's most famous soldier, lost his left eye in a sniper, requiring him to wear what became the world's most famous eye patch.

Subsequent Israeli intervention has never produced the results expected. The ambush of an Israeli patrol by Hizbollah guerrillas early yesterday morning, in which five soldiers were killed and eight wounded, underlines the failure of the 17-day Israeli bombardment of south Lebanon in April. In office he was completely surprised. "One of the wounded men told Israeli radio,

It is the second ambush since the Israeli election, bringing to nine the number of Israeli dead. Both attacks show careful planning, good intelligence

and the use of well-trained guerrillas. Israeli military sources confirmed Hizbollah's claim that an entire patrol from the Nahal infantry brigade, returning to its base near Beaufort castle, was killed in the attack.

Shimon Peres, the Prime Minister, said the attack in Lebanon was "serious" and Israel would "respond at a time and place of its own choosing". After flying to south Lebanon



Relatives carrying the body of one of the Beit Shemesh victims

and the use of well-trained guerrillas. Israeli military sources confirmed Hizbollah's claim that an entire patrol from the Nahal infantry brigade, returning to its base near Beaufort castle, was killed in the attack.

Shimon Peres, the Prime Minister, said the attack in Lebanon was "serious" and Israel would "respond at a time and place of its own choosing". After flying to south Lebanon

he later met Binyamin Netanyahu, the prime minister-elect, to discuss events there. Mr Netanyahu won the election by promising "peace with security" in Israel. In office he may respond to Hizbollah attacks by air strikes against targets in parts of Lebanon held by Syria.

The ambush in Lebanon came a few hours after two Israeli settlers, Efrat and Yaron Unger, from the militant settlement at Kiryat Arba near Hebron, were shot dead in their car at Beit Shemesh in Israel. Their nine-month-old son, Isha, survived unharmed.

The killing of Mr and Mrs Unger, both Orthodox Jews, may make it more difficult for Mr Netanyahu to redeploy Israeli troops from Hebron. "I think a suitable answer to such a terrible event should be to hold the land more strongly with our fingers and with our nails deep, deep in the earth," said Uri Dasberg, Efrat's father. Her mother Judith said: "We hope they are the last victims of the Oslo accord."

The couple were killed as they returned from a wedding late on Sunday night, but they were still within Israel when the attack occurred.

Meanwhile in Gaza the Palestinian authorities have once again arrested Iyad Sarraj, the leading Palestinian human rights activist who was held for nine days last month after sharply criticising the government of Yasser Arafat for carrying out arbitrary arrests and torturing suspects. Mr Sarraj was picked up at his Gaza City home on Sunday night by eight Palestinian policemen who gave no reason for his arrest.

Khalid Kidreh, the Palestinian attorney general, said Mr Sarraj, the head of the Palestinian Commission for Citizens' Rights, would be questioned for 48 hours, but declined to say why. Mr Sarraj's original offence was to give an interview to the *New York Times* in which he said Mr Arafat's government, established in Gaza in 1994, was corrupt and dictatorial.

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## international

# Italy tires of secessionist antics

Insults and publicity stunts do not a revolution make: such was the message Italian voters sent yesterday to Umberto Bossi, leader of the Northern League, who spent the past month embroiled in a flamboyant campaign to split Italy and set up an independent republic in the northern third of the country.

As results came in from elections in 160 communities, it became clear the League's antics had failed to make any but the most negative impression. Mr Bossi's party came in poor third in each of the key northern cities - Mantua, Pavia and Lodi - where League candidates were running for mayor.

Instead, candidates from the governing centre-left Olive Tree alliance led in all three cities and looked in a strong position to win the elections in next week's

**Voters reject the Northern League, writes Andrew Gumbel in Rome**

run-off with the centre-right Freedom Alliance. "The League got what it deserved," said Fabio Mussi, parliamentary floor leader of the left-wing PDS and one of Mr Bossi's harshest critics.

In the run-up to the elections the League established a separate "government" in the north and called for independence and a separate currency. Mr Bossi compared himself to Gandhi, described his detractors as riff-raff and fascists and dressed his supporters in militaristic green shirts.

Were Mr Bossi's an orthodox secessionist movement, one could conclude that his dreams of an independent Padania, as he has renamed his core constituency,

had been shattered. The elections were certainly a setback, especially after the League's strong showing in the general election in April but whether they will be enough to silence Italy's most volatile politician is another matter.

It has never been entirely clear if Mr Bossi is serious about secession, or if he is using it as a propaganda tool to pressure the government into delivering what his voters really want: greater local autonomy, less bureaucratic hassle from Rome and, above all, lower and less complicated taxes.

Yesterday one of Mr Bossi's most prominent lieutenants, the former speaker of the Rome parliament, Irene Pivetti, ad-

mitted that Padania was more a "poetic expression" than a geographical reality and described secession as no more than a talking point. Yet the canailleus and threats of civil disobedience are carrying on.

Yesterday provincial authorities in Mantua, which are in League hands, slapped an eviction order on the office of the central government prefect for the area, a provocation intended to stir up debate on the role and questionable usefulness of the office of prefect.

The League's "government", held its first cabinet meeting in a Venetian palace loaned by an aristocratic sympathiser. And in the industrial town of Mestre, across the lagoon, a breakaway

group of anti-tax protesters staged a noisy rally.

The past month has brought out the two key characteristics of the League. On the one hand, its value as a political force is severely limited. "It dresses itself up as a national protest movement but in fact its strength on the ground is patchy at best," said another senior parliamentarian from the government benches, Diego Masi.

On the other hand, as a propaganda machine and a permanent thorn in the side of the establishment, it can be remarkably effective. The secession campaign may have outraged ministers but has also scared them into acting more quickly than they otherwise

might to address the appalling tax and administration legacy of the past.

Yesterday, as the prefect of Mantua was being evicted, the Regional Affairs Minister, Franco Bassani, admitted pre-

fects do not do much anyway and may be abolished. He is

working overtime to produce a draft law on administration of the regions within the next month and his colleagues have

promised an emergency review of taxation procedures.

Top of the hit-list is the tested *bolla di accompagnamento*, a tax stamp that must be bought when even the smallest consignment of goods is transported. Even a takeaway pizza has to have its *bolla di accompagnamento*, which helps explain why almost no restaurant countenances home deliveries.

**The death toll in two landslides in China's south-west, which buried gold miners under hundreds of tons of mud, has risen to 100, with another 138 missing. More than 1,000 rescue workers were still digging through the mud and rocks to reach the entrances to the mines on Liaojinshan mountain in Yunnan province in which the 138 miners who are still missing have been buried since the landslides on 31 May and 3 June, the official Xinhua news agency said. Peking - Reuter**

**Mongolian firefighters dropped by parachute have put out, or controlled, the last of the massive prairie and forest fires that raged for months across the country, killing 25 people. "All the fires are put out," Gansukh, a Foreign Ministry spokesman, said in Ulan Bator. (Many Mongolians use only one name.) Rain helped to extinguish some of the fires, he said. Firefighters who were dropped by parachute tackled eight fires, including two which were burning about 70 kilometres from Ulan Bator on Saturday. He said. Peking - Reuter**

**The worst ever salmonella poisoning epidemic in Hungary claimed its first victim yesterday, an 80-year-old man with a history of heart problems died in hospital. The epidemic has been traced to a cold strawberry soup - a summertime favourite - delivered by a Budapest catering company to a number of schools, kindergartens and old age pensioners' homes late last week. Almost 500 people were hospitalised after eating the soup and some 4,000 more suffered with fever, diarrhoea and vomiting. Many of the small children affected were yesterday said to be still in serious but not critical condition due to dehydration. Adrian Bridge, Budapest**

**At least 72 people were reported to have died in a fire on board a ship in the Red Sea off the coast of Eritrea. Most of them were Ethiopians. The ship, which was reportedly carrying 105 people, caught fire on Thursday near Dahlak island, off Asmara. The boat was illegally attempting to cross the maritime border that separates Eritrea and Saudi Arabian waters, Radio Eritrea said. The accident was not reported until yesterday. The cause of the fire and the name of the ship were not immediately known. Asmara, Eritrea - AP**

**Zimbabwe's white health minister may have wed a 15-year-old peasant by accident and turned bigamist in what he thought was a spoof ceremony for an anti-Aids drive. Timothy Stamps, 59, thought the traditional bride price he "paid" for Stella Gurira, during a visit he made last month to her village, was a humorous way to thank her community for a clinic that they had built. But Stella's parents say they need to talk to Mr Stamps so he can clarify his intentions toward their daughter. Harare - Reuter**



Master images: A visitor to the exhibition in the Unter den Linden examines an outsize bust of the writer Maxim Gorky, considered the founder of the doctrine of socialist realism; in the background, Stalin looks on. Photograph: AP

Phone lines are open 8am-8pm Monday-Friday and 10am-2pm Saturday. Calls may be recorded and monitored. Issued by Midland Bank plc.



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including the ancient city of Vladimir, 200 miles east of Moscow, and the central "black earth" country, which includes Lipetsk in what is also seen as "red belt", or Communist territory.

Mr Filatov said that Mr Yeltsin's ratings should go over the 35-40 per cent mark this week, giving him a comfortable first-round victory but not enough to win outright. But 20-25 per cent of the electorate were still undecided. Three recent polls suggested that this group is shrinking, and gave Mr Yeltsin between 34.5 and 37 per cent, eight points or more ahead of Mr Zyuganov, with between 26 and 15.9 per cent.

But the Yeltsin camp's figures also suggested some other trends afoot: Mr Zhirinovsky, who stunned the world when his party came second in December but seems since to have disintegrated, is making a last-minute rally. The liberal economist Mr Grigory Yavlinsky has moved ahead of Mr Yeltsin in Kaliningrad. And General Alexander Lebed is moving upwards slightly.

Yesterday the President's handlers were being careful not to seem too complacent, despite the upbeat mood of his boss. They were busy stoking up an old story that the Communist party has set up armed formations ready to go into action if the elections do not go their way. To counter this, the streets will be flooded with three times as many police as usual - almost as many as the number of observers from the two main rival camps who plan to descend on the 96,000 voting stations to check that their enemies do not cheat. If nothing else it will be an eventful, and rather crowded, day.

Like you, Alistair saw an advert in the paper claiming that Midland could lower his household insurance. Alistair's got some quite expensive furniture and his insurance premiums had been fairly hefty, so he felt that any saving would be welcome. He rang us on 0800 277 377, was given a free quotation, double-checked the policy document (which is available on request) and was pleasantly surprised. Maybe you would be, too.

## Bullish Yeltsin targets Communist voters' country

PHIL REEVES  
Moscow

Boris Yeltsin, riding high on the strength of flattering polls, scored a double-barrelled success yesterday. His spin doctors flourished evidence that the President is now ahead in his fight for re-election in some of the most sought-after, voter-rich territory in Russia. And a crucial agreement was signed in Chechnya.

Under the document, the Russians have agreed to withdraw their troops from the war-tattered republic by the end of August in return for the disarmament of the Chechen fighters - a deal which marks another crucial step towards Mr Yeltsin's promise to end the conflict before election day on Sunday.

The move came as the President's now almost-triumphant bandwagon rumbled into the southern city of Rostov-on-Don.

where he insisted that he firmly expects to win Sunday's election outright, without going to a runoff. "There will be no second round," he said, before repeating his campaign stunt of giving away money to potential voters this time, funds for two schools.

Mr Yeltsin's bullish confidence appears to be rooted in the figures compiled by his advisers, which suggest he has seized the lead in a clutch of prize areas, some of which voted for the Communist Party in December's parliamentary elections. According to Sergei Filatov, a key figure in Mr Yeltsin's campaign, their analysis have concluded that his ratings have pushed ahead in the far east, the north-west, the Volga valley, the Ural mountains, and western and eastern Siberia.

As examples of these areas, Mr Filatov, a former chief of staff to the President, told the

Independent that they were hoping to win the Volgograd, Nizhny Novgorod, and Perm regions; the Krasnoyarsk and Primorsky territories and the Bashkortostan Republic - despite past Communist successes in these areas. Each contains a healthy parcel of voters - of around 1 million or more, based on last year's turn-out.

The science of election information gathering is almost as unsophisticated in Russia as its fledgling democracy, and the President's strategists are as prone to being partisan as anyone else operating in the fevered political cauldron. But their figures may offer clues to the centres that the President is likely to target as the race gathers momentum towards an almost certain run-off in July.

Among key battle grounds, according to Mr Filatov, are the north Caucasus; central Russia,



## international

# Clinton seeks to put a squeeze on Burma

RUPERT CORNWELL  
Washington  
RICHARD LLOYD PARRY  
Tokyo

The US has sent two senior diplomats to Asia to work out a strategy for putting pressure on the Burmese military regime to stop its persecution of the opposition movement, led by the dissident and Nobel Prize-winner Aung San Suu Kyi. Their visit is aimed at heading off pressure in Congress for tougher action - including sanctions.

The despatch of Ambassadors William Brown and Stanley Roth follows the adoption by Rangoon of laws which prohibit any attempt to draw up a rival constitution for a democratic movement. This would in effect muzzle Ms Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy Party (NLD) which has held large rallies outside her house in recent weeks.

The dissident leader, said a State Department spokesman, "has a right, under international law and any reasonable standard of decency, to speak out about conditions in her own country." Washington is also demanding the release of more than 100 NLD activists still in detention.

Britain also expressed concern that around 30 opponents of the military regime remained in detention. "We are also concerned by reports that some have been charged and may be put on trial behind closed doors, including one of Aung San Suu Kyi's close personal aides, U Win Hein," said a Foreign Office spokesman.

The Clinton administration, which has become increasingly outspoken of late about human rights abuses and the suppression of dissent in Burma, hopes its move will prod the military junta into some form of dialogue with the opposition.

On Capitol Hill, a bipartisan Bill has been tabled that would bar US investment in Burma entirely, instead of the more gradual reduction in trade and diplomatic contacts hitherto pursued by the administration.

The State Department is opposed to additional mandatory sanctions, arguing that the US needs to retain the ability to respond to events in Burma. Washington is infuriated by the failure of the Burmese junta to crack down on narcotics trafficking, but must keep an eye on major US economic investments in the country. The local energy company has a major stake in a \$1bn offshore gas project which provides human

power to the opposition. But Congress is also considering bills with pressure from Congress for more radical action that - as in the case of Iran and Cuba - could merely provoke a split with its allies.

The two US envoys yesterday began their whistle-stop tour of east Asia in Tokyo, where they met the Japanese foreign minister, Yukio Hatoyama. Japan's support will be vital to Washington. Japanese grant aid and technical co-operation to Burma amounted to \$134m in 1994 - more than twice the 1993 total. Many of the biggest names in Japanese business and finance, including C. Itoh, Sumitomo, Mitsui, Fuji Bank and Mitsubishi, have offices in Rangoon, and several others have plans to follow suit.

But yesterday's meeting seemed to produce little. Japan and the United States can join forces on the Burma question, because we share the same

concerns and goals even if we differ slightly on concrete measures," a Japanese foreign ministry official quoted Mr Hatoyama as saying.

And if past form is anything to go by, then Burma will be unlikely to receive much more than a brisk tick-off from Tokyo. Having extended help to a country, Tokyo has in the past proved reluctant to withdraw it, even after blatant human rights violations. After the Tiananmen

massacre, Japan reluctantly joined its allies in freezing aid packages to China, but took the lead in re-establishing aid a few years later. Mr Brown and Mr Roth were scheduled to fly on to the Philippines yesterday, and later to visit Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. But in Burma, new billboards denouncing Aung San Suu Kyi appeared, saying she was a foreigner who should be crushed.



Voice of defiance: Aung San Suu Kyi and a supporter at a rally last weekend

Photograph: Michael Nagasawa/Reuters

## US deserted Vietnamese commandos

TIM CORNWELL  
Los Angeles

Newly declassified documents detail how the US military washed its hands of several hundred Vietnamese commandos it sent on abortive sabotage missions in the early years of the Vietnam War. The documents, which the Pentagon fought to keep secret, show that the US literally scratched the names of the men from its payroll lists, stopping payments to families despite evidence showing many were alive in North Vietnamese prisons.

Senator John Kerry, a decorated Vietnam veteran, said this week his country should now pay what it owed to nearly 300 surviving commandos. They have brought a law suit seeking back pay of just \$2,000 (£1,300) a year, without interest, from the mid-1960s. "It's the wrong thing to deny them the honour they deserve," Senator Kerry said. "This is an important matter of both conscience and common sense for the country. We paid our prisoners, and these men were working for us."

The release of the documents caps a long struggle by the Vietnamese and their American supporters to force the US government to accept them as living proof of Oplan 34-Alpha, a covert operation launched in 1961. Most of the men now live in the US. But lawyers defending the law suit for the Pentagon insisted as late as last week that secret contracts for covert operations are unenforceable, based on an 1875 Supreme Court ruling which denied back pay to a spy in the American Civil War.

Senator Kerry said he would seek bipartisan support to find \$11m in the US defense budget to meet the commandos' claims. "Somewhere out there, there's a golf course that can be sacrificed for principle," he said.

Oplan 34-A was initiated by William Colby, then the CIA's Saigon station chief, who later rose to be the agency's director and died earlier this year. Vietnamese who had fled the communist North were trained in espionage and sabotage and sent back. A secret report on the

operation later described their experience as "a one-way street with no hope of return." It appeared almost all were rapidly captured or killed.

US officials became suspicious that teams were "turned" working for the North Vietnamese to feed false intelligence back to their operators. But trials of others, and their 30-year sentences, were broadcast on Radio Hanoi. In 1964 the US military's Special Operations Group took the operation over from the CIA. It was then that officers began going through the list of the missing, the documents suggest, declaring a number of them dead each month. The treatment of the commandos is in striking contrast to the almost obsessive US search for its own men listed as prisoners of war or missing in action.

John Mattox, the Florida attorney representing 281 commandos, says he has compiled

"I gave my life for the operation. Why did America forget us?"

a list of about 60 who were once declared dead. "Widows" received death benefits of as little as \$200.

As late as 1995, the US Immigration and Naturalisation Service tried to block refugee status for a group of more than 50 of the commandos, who were tortured, served long jail sentences, and lived as parishes in Vietnam after their release.

Nguyen Van Ke was parachuted into North Vietnam in 1964. He was listed in Defense Department records as captured soon after landing. Now aged 63, he lives like many of the refugees in Southern California. He told the *Los Angeles Times* of 13 years in a Vietnamese jail including torture, and bouts of solitary confinement. He was reunited with his family on his release in 1977, but managed to reach the US only two months ago. "I gave my life for the operation," he said. "Why did America forget us?"

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# Only a classic Eurocompromise can save us

**T**he great British beef war of 1996 has, predictably, turned into a messy British embarrassment. The implication of the tough talking by other European ministers in Luxembourg yesterday is that their governments are preparing to adopt a policy of non-cooperation with John Major. Even the Dutch put their clogs into Malcolm Rifkind at yesterday's meeting of EU foreign ministers. When you've made the civil Dutch angry, you can be sure you are in real trouble. How can anyone, apart from the most unreconstructed little Englanders, take pleasure in this? The whole sorry episode can only go on damaging this country's true interests in Europe.

However, it was also the Dutch Foreign Minister, Hans Van Mierlo, who came up with a sensible proposal that might yet provide Mr Major with an escape route, if he is willing, or able, to take it. The proposal has a familiar logic (ask Gerry Adams). In essence, the Dutch said, an outline deal may still be possible, but not before the British government announces a ceasefire.

The European Commission would propose a framework, or statement of intent, for the step-by-step lifting of the beef export ban over several years; Britain would end its blocking tactics; and then member governments would discuss and, hopefully, agree the Commission plan. This would involve something of a public climb-down for the

Government. But it could also declare something of a victory. If the whole process could be speeded up so it took place over a couple of days, or even one afternoon, it should be possible for Mr Major to sign up.

It is time for the Government to cut its losses. The entire misbegotten campaign was based on the view that Continentals don't like it up 'em, bully them a bit and they'll cave in. This has proved hopelessly wrong. Britain's technical case against the beef ban was good. Our political case was poor, even selfish.

The Government's announcement in March that BSE could lead to a similar disease in humans caused consumer panic across the Continent and sent beef markets into free fall. Even now, with the British domestic beef trade almost back to normal, German and French sales of non-British beef remain one third below last year's levels. In other words, this is a real political and domestic issue for our partners, not some arcane Euro dispute over money or principle.

In domestic political terms, standing up to British blocking tactics and refusing any further lifting of the beef ban is the painless thing for Continental governments to do. There is no big constituency in Germany crying out for an obscure and technical EU anti-fraud measure (however sensible). There is a big constituency which is terrified of British beef (rightly or wrongly).

At the same time, there is genuine

fury and bafflement in Europe that Britain should try to bludgeon agreement on such a complex issue, where there are rights and wrongs on both sides. Something rather ugly, something personal, is creeping into the dispute. There appears to be a growing determination on the Continent to teach Mr Major a lesson. This is as deplorable as Britain's failed tactics.

Throughout the 1980s, Mrs Thatcher had a series of running battles with our EU partners over farm policy reform and the level of UK contributions. Relations became pretty difficult but never as desperate as this. Why? First,

there was a grudging recognition that Mrs Thatcher had a case. Second, her tactics were better chosen. She selected her battlegrounds more carefully and took hostage large, inanimate issues – issues which other European governments wanted to resolve, but which mattered little to public opinion. Third, the remote prospect of a British Labour government was, at that time, even more unappealing to our partners than Mrs Thatcher. They knew they had to deal with the iron lady, or no one.

The tough line taken by the European Commission at the weekend, and many European governments yesterday, does

not (yet) represent a turning away from Britain. It does represent a turning away from John Major. Until, a few weeks ago, Continental politicians, if asked whether they were holding their breath for the coming of Tony Blair, would reply politely: "No. We are looking forward to the British election because we feel that whatever government emerges – Tory or Labour – would be freer to deal with Europe more constructively."

The beef war has changed all that. Every member state will do it; but they are now damned if they are going to hand Mr Major the kind of beef triumph which could be electorally beneficial. Their tactics may also now be faulty. A continuing, or escalating, crisis over several months will, in any case, result in an election in a blaze of Union flags. If the Tories were to win such an election, it is possible to imagine a series of worsening show-downs with Europe leading to British marginalisation, even withdrawal. Mr Santer's decision to raise this issue is premature, and impolitic, but such fears are no longer entirely absurd.

So what now? The Government is evidently uncomfortable with its own campaign. It hoped its decision to release a couple of hostages would help the atmosphere in Luxembourg yesterday. It just made the whole thing look siller. Why allow trade negotiations with Algeria but block criticism of Indonesia's behaviour in East Timor?

What has any of it got to do with beef?

The next 10 days up to the Florence summit are critical. A slender hope still exists that something like a classic Eurocompromise can be found. Mr Major should explore the possibilities of the Dutch settlement. He has raised emotions so high that any compromise is bound to be lambasted by the Eurosceptics and a section of the Europhobic press. But it is time for the remaining Euro-sensible members of the Government to insist that sanity prevails.

## Shape up, guys

Step by step, men are learning to discuss their feelings with wives and lovers, show love for their children – even to listen more than they talk. All in all, they are learning to become more human – or at least more like women, which is nearly the same thing. But a sensible view of their physical well-being seems beyond them, poor mutes.

Eight out of 10 readers of *Men's Health* magazine admitted to health worries but they seem unable to talk to their GPs. Whatever the reason, they should get down to the business of staying well. Dodging doctors ends in tears, ruined relationships and even death. Ailing men should spare a thought for the women who will end up nursing them (or missing them), and get fit.



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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Let teachers get on with their job

**Sir:** Your leading article "A theme for Labour's school song" (8 June) hits at least one nail on the head when it distinguishes between education and education policy.

As a now retired, professional, who has taught in three types of schools (grammar, technical and comprehensive) and in teacher education, I have been amazed at the confusion in the press between these two concepts. The overwhelming majority of teachers with whom I have come into contact treat the job of teaching pragmatically. What matters to them in teaching any subject is what "works", based on their experience in schools. They will accept education policy as giving general direction to their work, granted it does not interfere with their professional judgement of what works in their circumstances.

Here lies the rub. Too many so-called policy statements from the politicians have been concerned with such matters as how to teach reading, or whether classes should be taught in groups, and so on. Let teachers decide this for themselves based on their collective experiences and on whatever evidence research provides.

Professor NORMAN GRAVES  
Epsom, Surrey

**Sir:** Following Tony Blair's announcement on Labour's commitment to dismantling mixed-ability education we are writing to condemn this amazing attack on the key teaching strategy for raising achievement for all pupils.

Mixed ability has nothing to do with political correctness or utopian dreaming. It is the foundation for the proven success of the comprehensive system. More pupils leave school today with qualifications than ever did under the old systems. Illiteracy levels have gone down as the comprehensive system has developed. The comprehensive system developed because of the failures of these past systems, which grouped pupils on the basis of flawed tests and flawed philosophies. Mixed-ability teaching challenged selection, streaming and setting, strategies which automatically led to examination failure for the majority of school leavers. Mixed-ability teaching is based on a real understanding of how children learn.

Mr Blair's announcement came as no surprise. The actions of senior members of the Labour Party in sending their children to selective and grant-maintained schools spoke volumes. We have no intention of sitting back and allowing a Labour government to take us back to a system that meant mainly working-class children were condemned to failure.

H. VYNNE WILLIAMS  
and 21 other trade union members  
Croydon School  
London SE4

**Sir:** Oh, come on. Just who are you trying to kid by marking it as an exclusive ("Teaching trainees have worst A-levels", 10 June)? I did my A-levels in 1971 and it was widely known then that if one failed to get the grades for university or polytechnic one could always get into teacher training college. The teaching profession was seen as the fall-back option. The sad thing is that nothing has changed since then.

There is only one way for this to change. The Government must stop constantly meddling with education



Stormont Castle

and, along with local authorities and school governors, they must start treating and paying teachers as the professionals they are.

The Rev MIKE BOSSINGHAM  
Maidenhead, Berkshire

**Sir:** Your article on university entry requirements (10 June) quotes the chief executive of UCAS as saying: "Well, we know performance at A-level is a very poor predictor of performance at degree level." I have read elsewhere that interviewing is an equally unreliable predictor of future achievement. So can anyone tell me why our bastions of learning rely so heavily on just these two methods to select their chosen few?

LEON SALEM  
London W5

### Cradles of fanaticism

**Sir:** The Rev Peter Hatton (letter, 8 June) claims that "this century's bloodiest mass murderers have not been believers".

Mao Tse-tung and Pol Pot were not believers in religion but were equally fanatical believers in an ideology partly derived from Judeo-Christian tradition. Hitler was brought up as a Catholic and remained a believer in God and his system was a parody of medieval Christianity. Stalin was trained as an Orthodox priest and his system was a parody of tsarist Russia.

The historical context is crucial. Just as Nazi anti-Semitism derived from the long tradition of Christian anti-Semitism, European imperialism derived from the long tradition of Christian evangelicism. The conquerors and colonisers held a sword in one hand,

a Bible in the other. It is no coincidence that the first atomic bombs were used by white Christians against non-white non-Christians.

The danger is irrational belief of any kind and the remedy is liberalism and rationalism.

NICOLAS WALTER  
Rationalist Press Association  
London N1

### Rail privatisation starts to work

**Sir:** I must set the record straight regarding comments attributed to me by Christian Wolmar ("Rail privatisation will never benefit users", 20 May).

Rail privatisation is still in its early stages, so it is not surprising that new benefits for passengers are not yet in evidence. Many improvements which we have seen over the last two years are the result of decisions taken by Train Operating Companies still under BR management.

There is, however, now real momentum in the privatisation process and tangible improvements are coming through to the benefit of passengers as a result of the new industry structure. We want passengers to benefit from the opportunities which the new arrangements bring; promises must be realised.

My emphasis was "no benefits yet", certainly not "no benefits ever".

DAVID BERTRAM  
Chairman  
Rail Users' Consultative Committee  
London EC2

**Sir:** The Rev Peter Hatton and

### Cathedral vs rubber factory

**Sir:** I was interested – as everyone involved with the conservation of our heritage should be – in Jonathan Glancey's comments on the consultation document *Protecting Our Heritage* (28 May).

He is a strong advocate of the need to respect modern architecture and, of course, he is right, always providing there is a sense of proportion.

"Any of us can say," he writes, "Oh yes, we must protect Peterborough Cathedral." We can say it, yes; but when faced with an incontrovertible and urgent need for over £1m to achieve it, rather than

providing there is a sense of proportion.

This is one of the two greatest Norman churches in Europe, Durham surely being the other. The immense painted oak ceiling in the nave is unique. It was completed in 1120 and is deteriorating dangerously. We need £2m to save that alone and that is but one of the seven essential rescue operations which we can only hope to complete given a generous and imaginative response from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Henry VIII described Peterborough as "the goodliest monument in all Christendom". Its claims upon the Heritage Fund must surely weigh against even the most magnificent rubber factory.

SIR STEPHEN HASTINGS  
Chairman  
Peterborough Cathedral Trust  
London SE4

Sir I was most distressed to see in today's letters column (10 June) that the remarkable Peter Jay is, for reasons unexplained, now homeless and forced to reside at the Garrick Club, presumably sleeping on a camp bed in a corner of the members' bar. It is surely a tragedy that such a first-class mind should be brought so low. Can I suggest a

readers' appeal to raise funds for a proper home for Mr Jay so that, when he sees fit to grace your correspondence columns, he is allowed the dignity of a real address, like the rest of us? It is the least Britain can do.

JAY RAYNER  
London SE4

### Let Britain vote on Ulster union

**Sir:**

After the most recent Unionist

electoral triumph, a thought

occurred.

The union is the most

contentious issue in Northern

Ireland and everyone in the province

is presumed to have a strong opinion

on it. Yet it is rarely suggested that

the citizens of Britain, the other

and far larger partner in the union,

might have opinions as well. They will

never be asked for them at a general

election, and a referendum is ruled

out. Supposing it turned out that the

majority wished to rid themselves of

the union; would Dr Paisley and Mr Trimble, so outspokenly committed to the democratic process, take

note?

Dr ERIC ADAMS  
Hounslow, Middlesex

**Sir:**

Handwriting and calligraphy

are separate uses of a writing tool.

Word processors are excellent but

they will never replace the need to

write legibly.

Can we ever foresee

everyone having a personal "lap

top" or being allowed to use it in

every situation?

Ken Welsby (letter, 6 June)

spoil his admirable plea that we

should be teaching children how to

express ideas and information

properly" by adding the irrelevant

idea to "leave calligraphy as an

option in the handicraft syllabus".

JOHN FAIRBANK  
Hove, East Sussex

**Sir:**

If "only 10 seconds" reflection

on the history of European warfare

over the past couple of hundred

years leads to an understanding of

Turkey's crucial geographical

position" (leading article, 7 June),

how about another 10 seconds of

cognition to understand just how

the West is betraying Turkey in

demanding that it deliver

everything in the West's laundry

list, whilst offering Turkey nothing in return?

The West demanded that Turkey

adopt democracy. Now you

apparently want to object to the

results of the democratic process.

You chose as an EU

## analysis

# John Birt: the devil and the BBC

Every move he makes outrages the traditionalists. Last week's management restructuring brought more protests. But **Mathew Horsman** argues he is not quite the demon he seems

**B**roadcasting's traditionalists - and they are a multitude - see John Birt, activist Director-General of the BBC, as the Antichrist, the devil himself, the man of mission statements but no mission, the architect of the mighty Beeb's ruin, its fall from Rehmanian grace.

He stands accused of destroying the soul of the nation's public service broadcaster: of downgrading its commitment to radio; of squandering its 75-year tradition of engineering excellence by proposing to sell off BBC Television; of replacing real, honest-to-goodness artists with accountants.

Can it be true? Can the Corporation have fallen into the hands of a cabal of small-minded, market-driven "suits", whose sole purpose is to destroy the BBC because it represents yet another producer monopoly to be sorted out like schools, hospitals and the unions.

What self-styled lover of culture, quality broadcasting and radio programming of the highest order can even begin to disagree with the complaints of the tireless defenders of the BBC's heritage?

Who would not concede that the future of BBC Radio is threatened by the announcement last week of the end of its independent status within the Corporation? Who is not worried about the future of the World Service (English-language), already emasculated by cuts and now to suffer the indignity of answering to a new, "streamlined" management called BBC Production?

Well before last week's radical management restructuring, which will see scheduling and commissioning separated from production for the first time, Mr Birt was already demonised within the organisation as the architect of the much-maligned "producer choice", and the father of 5,000 cuts (being the number of jobs pruned since he arrived in 1992). Producer choice, that quintessentially Birtian innovation, comes in for particular criticism. By allowing producers to choose between internal and external production teams to make programmes, the organisation was meant to be made more effi-



John Birt's way is not the only path forward, but in the new broadcasting environment, his will is hardly negotiable

cient. The system required, for the first time, an internal market: prices for the trade of goods and services within the Corporation had to be accounted for properly. Just like the NHS. God help us.

Last week's changes are a second movement on roughly the same theme. Henceforth, BBC Broadcast will be responsible for scheduling and commissioning, while BBC Production makes the programmes. The former will help develop the new services promised for the digital age - including some pay-TV channels themed on

public affairs, education and entertainment.

The latter will concentrate on providing the programming consumers want - for the domestic services, of course, but also for those willing to pay extra for subscription services. This is meant to save the BBC brand, to safeguard quality in a multi-channel environment.

And of course the impulse is heavily commercial. The management structure henceforth will look suspiciously like that of Channel 4 and the ITV Network Centre, with a few key mandarins to decide what will go out

over the airwaves. This, in Birt's view, makes the Corporation a "broadcasting powerhouse", ready to take on the world.

The two existing controllers, Alan Yentob at BBC1 and Michael Jackson at BBC2 will see their jobs mutate. Will Wyatt, currently head of television, becomes chief executive of BBC Broadcast. Under him, Jackson is likely to become Director of Television. Yentob, for his part, is slated to become director of programming at BBC Production, in a move that may not suit him quite so well as his current, central role in the popular BBC1.

The news and current affairs side of radio is also in line for major changes - not least a wholesale move from Broadcasting House to White City, in west London (although contrary to the *Independent's* report last week, the rest of the radio operations, including the entertainment programmes, will stay at the BBC).

The traditionalists hate these changes just as much as they loathed "producer choice". They are just a step towards a "virtual" corporation which commissions and schedules programming but has no real hand in making it. A step, then, towards the complete destruction

of the integrated BBC that has been the envy of the world. So much for the doomsayers' view. To paraphrase *1066 and All That*, the traditionalists are "romantic but wrong", while the Birtians are "right but wretched".

For there are uncomfortable truths facing the in a world so quickly transforming itself that standing still is hardly an option. Traditionalists owe it to themselves, if they really want to "save the BBC", to recognise the new broadcasting environment.

It is not a cosy duopoly of the BBC and commercial terrestrial television: it is not a coddled, protected business, where the licence fee comfortably meets all costs. Twenty-five per cent of British homes have a cable or satellite, giving them a choice of some 30 channels. That is not to mention Channel 4, which now takes 14 per cent of all commercial advertising revenue, from its standing start in 1981. Or Channel 5, to be launched in 1997. The "minority" services of pay-TV have already eaten into the audience and advertising shares of the mainstream broadcasters.

Consider the fragmented environment we are poised to enter. Rupert Murdoch, the real devil, promises 200 digital channels next year, all available for the cost of a satellite dish and a "set-top box". Cable companies will be able to deliver 150 channels to the home by the end of the decade, promising state-of-the-art Internet connections to boot. The BBC and ITV will launch digital terrestrial services from 1998, with perhaps 18 new services. What on earth will be broadcast on all those new channels?

The Americans are ready with several years' worth of niche programming, experience offering specialist Sci-Fi stuff for the *Star Trek* set, soft-core sex for the evening shift, 24-hour news, 24-hour weather, even "ambient imagery" - scenes of flickering fireplaces or tranquil lakeside scenes, to supplement the colour schemes of the yuppiest of sitting rooms.

The BBC must innovate, or it will die. That is the conclusion even of old hands such as Ian Hargreaves, former editor of the *Independent* and now editor of the *New Statesman*. Birt, the devil himself, warns that the BBC must not sit still, stroking its grey beard, as all around it reacts to the new environment.

Its success will be judged not against its enviable history but against its ability to survive in the future. That is why John Birt has pushed through his massive reform package. That is why there needs to be another mammoth management shake-up.

Much of what Birt is doing is driven by one, inescapable truth. A BBC that is but one broadcaster among many does

not go to play dead.

To respond to the new competitive environment, the organisation needs a modern management structure. It needs to be able to commission the very best programming for radio and television, destined for home and abroad. It needs to make the best use it can of its vaunted news-gathering ability, and if that means merging radio and TV news, then so be it.

Whatever the outcome, reforms look inevitable. One might not like the specifics - must radio be so sidelined?

Must there be a downgrading of production next to scheduling and commissioning? Does it really make sense to merge radio and TV news? - but the impulse is clearly right. If we are to have an open broadcasting environment, which even Labour seems to support, then we must have a reforming, mutating BBC.

It is perhaps unfortunate that Birt has become just a target of venom, such a hated destroyer of all that is good. He might be less maligned were he graced with a more attractive personality - less aloof, less of a suit (even if Armani in provenance). But we ought not to slay the messenger just because we do not like the message. If we are to have a digital revolution (and can we stop it?) then we must have a reformed BBC. If we are to save anything of the BBC we love (the quality, the variety, the reputation, the reliability), we must accept change.

Birt is not the only way forward, but it is the only realistic strategy on offer so far. So is John Birt the devil? Hardly.

England

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## All the ingredients for a best-seller

**H**ave you ever felt you could write a cookery book? At least, have you ever felt that the way you cook was at least as good as the way they cook in cookery books? Or to put it another way, did you ever feel that if Delia Smith could be a millionaire you could at least be a hundrednaire? Have you noticed that nobody knows the difference between "cookery book" and "cook book"?

Do you sometimes feel that, given guidance through the thicket of cookery writing, you could end up famous enough and rich enough to leave your husband and have a good time at last?

For not! To have an expert to guide you through these problem areas!

Yes, Crispin Foliat is here to answer all your questions about that vital question: "How do I get to write a cookery best-seller and who sounds the quicker the better?"

Crispin Foliat writes: No problem. First of all, you get a good name...

What's a good name?

Crispin Foliat writes: A good name, for a cookery writer, is one that half suggests some exotic dish and half suggests an exquisite rural village. Crispin Foliat, for instance. In my case, I sound halfway between "Crispin Foliat" and "crispy seaweed".

Hmm. Any other examples?

Crispin Foliat writes: Yes. Glynn Christian. Gary Rhodes. Andre Simon. Rick Stein. Robert Carrier...

Oh, come on! They don't sound remotely like an English village OR an exotic dish!

Crispin Foliat writes: You're getting the idea.

What idea? Anyway, Delia Smith doesn't sound like any place I have ever heard of!

Crispin Foliat writes: How about Ladysmith...? Rick Stein is an interesting name because he sounds more like a drink. Stein is a German beer mug, and Rick has over-

tones not only of Rick's Bar, but of rickey, that half-forgotten cocktail. You've heard of gin rickies?

Yes, but look, I think we're missing the point here. I want to know how to write a best-selling cook book, and my name is really quite irrelevant. Just get on with it, would you?

Crispin Foliat writes: Very good, very good! I think you may have the necessary touchiness?

Crispin Foliat writes: To be a TV superchef. Everyone has to have a gimmick to be a TV superchef. It could be touchiness. It could just be something you held in your hand. Ken Hom had his wok. Keith Floyd had a glass of red wine. But whatever it is, you have to have your TV series before you sell really serious quantities of books.

Sometimes you have a TV series with no book, which is a tragedy...

I am sorry, I don't quite understand that.

Crispin Foliat writes: No, that should do it.

## Ambushers lie in wait as Major enters the pass

The floor of the House of Commons may have lost its supremacy over many aspects of public life – judicial, diplomatic, and as the place for national argument – but it retains absolute supremacy in one key area there, and there alone, are struggling governments killed off. That is not an interesting observation. But, as John Major's administration twitches and jerks its way across the front pages, it is an essential one.

On all sides, this seems a government that rests on powder-fragile foundations. At Stormont, the ultimate guarantors of Major's majority, the Ulster Unionists, are being angrily confronted by a table they don't want to sit around. The politics of the next few weeks of Northern Irish life will be, to put it mildly, turbulent and impatent; Mr Major has commented privately that he may be the first British premier to be ousted by the Irish question since William Gladstone.

Meanwhile, at Luxembourg and Brussels, and other places where politics has been generally placid and patient, British ministers are being harangued by continental politicians who have had enough. The European Union is an institution founded upon the politics of

Tonight's vote on Bill Cash's referendum Bill could bring a sleepy House of Commons to life

compromise and wince. Without second-bests and weary handshakes, it would not exist at all. Yet Britain has achieved the hitherto-unthinkable; we have united every other country in an uncompromising mood against us. In that, as in some of his recent privatisations, Mr Major has comprehensively out-Thatcherised Margaret Thatcher.

In this pass, he can go forward or he can retreat. If he carries on with his campaign, voting many more innocent and useful EU initiatives, then he will confirm the growing continental view that he is not worth doing business with. The big players are now at least half-committed to sacking the Major government out, giving it no political help at all, and waiting for Tony Blair. The Prime Minister is dangerously close to becoming friendless in the EU, in a way Lady Thatcher never quite was.

Certainly, thus far, the veto-barrage has produced greater stubbornness in Paris and Bonn, out less. This will make the Government vulnerable, at least in theory, to further defections by the right, remains likelier than a revolt by the civilised, moist-palmed wets.

If that happens, those political isolationists whose prejudices Messrs Rifkind and Major have been so busy whipping up will not forgive either of them. On balance, the possibility of a kamikaze parliamentary revolt by the right remains likelier than a revolt by the civilised, moist-palmed wets.

Today's vote on Bill Cash's referendum Bill will be a fascinating test of the ultimate strength of the Eurosceptic and anti-EU right – and the current weakness of the administration's internal authority. To put it crudely, many Conservative MPs now fear Sir James Goldsmith's

small Referendum Party more than they fear the government whips.

This may seem bizarre, but it is, in fact, quite rational. The whips can hector and report back to Downing Street; but they will not be there on election day, when Goldsmith's candidates might yet decide whether a chap can keep his seat until 2002. Partly as a result of this, the pro-

referendum Tories are privately expecting more than 100 supporters tonight. However, glossed, that would be a blow for Major, who is firmly opposed to a wide-ranging plebiscite.

If Ulster looms and storm clouds gather over Europe, then the domestic political weather pattern is as ominous for him too. The patter-patter of potential defectors has been audible for weeks. The Christian Democrat and literary George Walden has more or less had it with his gross and overly Saxon colleagues. The hooded-eyed conspiracist and right-winger Sir George Gardiner is in trouble with his association, and still making dark threats. And, for light relief, Terry Dicks is threatening to go too, over the Stormont talks. After a decade of reporting politics based, above all, on the principle of never taking Mr Dicks seriously, one is reluctant to start now. Even so, the general impression of a frangible and flaking Conservative majority is hard to avoid.

Look at all that, and you would think that the Tories are likely to be out by October. If you were an Opposition politician, then you

would certainly hope so. This may be a shallow, consumer-led recovery, of a predictable sort; but it is a real one. It would be extraordinary if it didn't start to show up in the polls. There are senior Whitehall people who feel that Tony Blair isn't home yet.

The same feeling has led to Mr Blair's office being harangued by Labour supporters who want to know why he hasn't brought down the Government already. From there, the response is tinged with world-weariness: "It's a simple matter of arithmetic. If there is a way to bring them down, we will find it and take it." One gets the impression that the Government's success in staving off defeat over the Scott report, despite Robin Cook's brilliantly forensic attack, has taken the edge off Labour's appetite for a vote-of-confidence showdown.

And, indeed, it is not so easy. Lord Callaghan is Labour's living reminder of how long a minority government can survive, by late-night strategems, the buying-off of minor parties, and sheer collective willpower. As he has said himself, Callaghan was Prime Minister when Labour's majority was lost as John

Stonehouse defected in 1976, setting himself up as the English National Party, before standing trial for his and fraud. And Callaghan was still Prime Minister when Stonehouse was released from jail in 1979.

What kept Callaghan going, despite the crumbling of the Labour movement in the late Seventies, was the reluctance of the smaller parties to bring him down. Major is in a similar position. He could lose Walden, Dicks, Gardiner and a few more besides, and still struggle on – just so long as the Unionists stick by him. And they would be acting out of character if they threw away their rare and valuable leverage on the Commons before they had to.

Yet Labour should be hungrier and more aggressive in the Commons than they are. The place gives the impression of having gone half to sleep for the summer, which is very convenient for Mr Major and his colleagues. If they can make it to the end of next month, they can probably make it to the Budget; and if they can make it to the Budget, they can probably last until the early spring. And by then ... well, nine months is a very long time in politics. For those reasons, I expect a Labour ambush of some kind within weeks. But I also expect it to fail.



ANDREW MARR  
The pitter-patter of potential defectors has been audible for weeks

## England expects ... not a lot, really

England's footballers have been infected with lad culture: ironic, languid, detached. Fine in a TV studio, not so funny at Wembley ...

A footballing nation, traumatised by England's dismal display against Switzerland on Saturday, is seeking desperate remedies. I, of course, have the answer, but first let me consider one of the most apparently sensible solutions.

In the *Daily Mail*, Andrew Neil says we should abandon our four home international sides and play as Britain United. "It is", he writes, "the height of conceit to think that we are capable of international success when the best British players are split between four teams."

On the face of it, this makes perfect sense. The national divisions sustained by our international footballing identity are wildly anomalous. Individual states in the USA are more emotionally and practically independent of Washington than Wales, Northern Ireland or Scotland are of London, and almost any country you care to name has equally or more profound regional distinctions. We are, to the rest of the world, the United Kingdom, a single, blended, eccentric and usually cantankerous unit. To play as four separate teams is merely one more symptom of our bone-headed, atristic temperament. And, of course, from our own point of view, we are no good – surely it is far better, under the circumstances, to widen the soccer gene pool from which our ashen-faced managers can draw their teams.

The first problem with this is that it would damage us politically. Having four teams means



BRYAN APPLERAY

Ryan Giggs, the mercurial, floppy-haired winger from Wales. And does anybody believe he alone is enough to make any difference – apart, of course, from increasing the number of teenage female fans? The sad truth is that Britain United may have looked a little more stylish – they could, let's face it, scarcely have looked less – against Switzerland, but they would still have limped off with a dismal draw. Admittedly, in the Sixties, any constitutional change would have been justified to bring George Best in from the boondocks of the Northern Ireland team. But Best is not Best. Indeed, in a thousand years of football no nation can hope to produce his like again.

And so we come to my solu-



Paul Gascoigne celebrates England's goal against Switzerland last Saturday. But 90 minutes of real football is a bit much to expect of him

Photograph: Neal Simpson/Empics

In picking Gazza, therefore, we are picking half a player; and, indeed, the clubs that have paid millions for his services must have been buying no more than 50 per cent of the whole man. This is pretty extraordinary and suggests a whole new way of doing business. I might, for example, agree to write columns for the *Independent* on the clear understanding that I would only use, say, 15 letters of the alphabet. Or John Major might agree to be Prime Minister on every other day – though perhaps he does that already.

On Saturday afternoon, something of the same spirit appeared to infect the whole England team. An entire match seemed just too much to expect from the poor dears. They were, quite simply, unfit – whether emotionally or physically I cannot say. I watched all the other weekend games and none of the other teams displayed anything like these post-interval symptoms of lassitude and exhaustion. They were all committed, fierce and fast; we were all detached, self-indulgent and languid.

The reason is, I think, irony. Irony is currently all over English sport like a cheap suit. Top of the charts is an ironic sooty by those two ironic lads Baddiel and Skinner about football coming home after 30 years in which, presumably, it has been abroad. The accompanying video makes much of the fact that neither Baddiel nor Skinner can play soccer to save their lives. Plus, of course, these two host a television programme called *Fantasy Football*.

States, successful sports coaches become moral shepherds to the nation. The Promise Keepers, the male fundamentalist Christian sect which is driving previously alienated urban men back to their homes and families, was started by a sports coach. In the United States, as in many other nations, sporting excellence is an expression and celebration of moral character.

Fantasy is the theme of all these newspaper games at the moment. We are invited to play pretend football or whatever from the comfort of our armchairs. The effect is to distance the real game, to remove the possibility of real commitment or heroism to a safe distance. Lad culture – of which all this is the clearest expression – certainly glorifies football, but it does so with a remote, ironic, Post-Modern chuckle. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that when the real England team takes to a real England pitch they behave as if they are surprised by the reality of it all – all that grass and stuff. Gazza and friends have started to think that football means tickling boxes, not kicking balls.

This is a hopeless state of affairs. Modern sport cannot be played ironically. Other countries demand heroism and a defence of national pride from their players. In the United

League in which the one consistent joke is that nobody is particularly good at the game itself.

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# Government accused of nuclear sale deception

PATRICK TOOHER

The controversy surrounding nuclear privatisation intensified yesterday when the Labour Party accused the Government of lying to the public and misleading Parliament over details of new woman's sale of British Energy, which is expected to raise up to £2bn in help fund pre-election tax cuts. Labour also attacked the big pay increases detailed in the pathfinder for British Energy's main board directors.

The allegations came as British Energy, the loss-making nuclear generating company being sold off, revealed in its pathfinder prospectus that shareholders would receive maiden dividends totalling £96m – almost twice as much as the company is expected to make in pre-tax profits in its first year on the stock market.

Up to 700 million shares in the company, representing the Government's entire stake, are being sold.

The first of two instalments for small investors will be at 100p per share, with a minimum investment of £300. So far, more than 750,000 private investors have registered for shares.

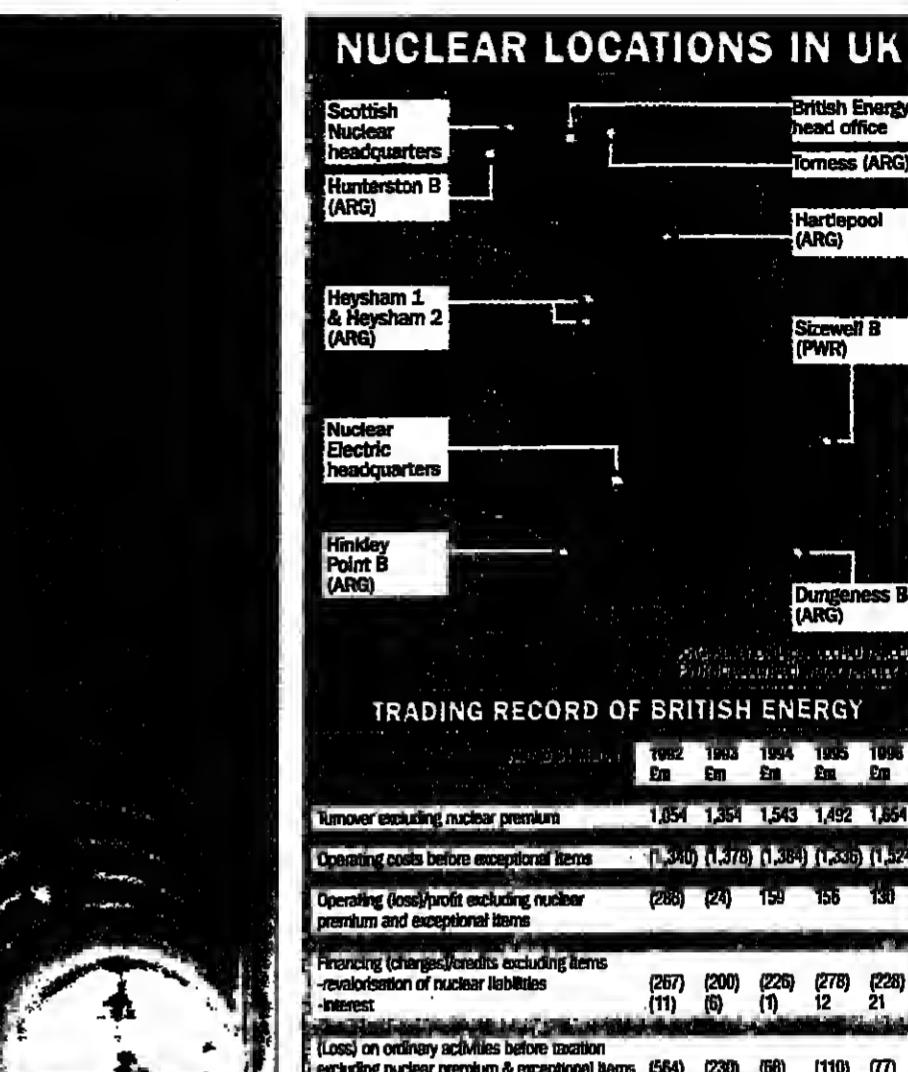
John Battle, the shadow energy minister, said the main "Tory lie" was the Government's failure to ensure that there were enough funds to deal with long-term nuclear liabilities. He said: "This sale is subsidised to a quite unprecedented degree."

He added: "It is an extraordinarily bad deal for the taxpayers and if it goes ahead under these terms then a Labour government would certainly have to examine the regulatory framework in which British Energy operates."

Mr Battle's accusation related to the storage and fuel reprocessing and decommissioning of power plants of the nine old Magnox reactors remaining in state hands. Some li-



Pathfinders: (from left) Robert Hawley, chief executive, Tim Eggar MP, and John Battle, chairman of British Energy



## TRADING RECORD OF BRITISH ENERGY

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
Turnover excluding nuclear premium	1,854	1,391	1,543	1,492	1,854
Operating costs before exceptional items	1,340	1,378	1,381	1,338	1,324
Operating (loss) profit excluding nuclear premium and exceptional items	(268)	(24)	159	156	150
Financing charges/credits excluding items	(267)	(200)	(226)	(278)	(226)
Interest	(11)	(6)	(1)	12	21
(Loss) on ordinary activities before taxation excluding nuclear premium & exceptional items	(564)	(230)	(68)	(110)	(77)

the underlying increase for existing board members was 10 per cent.

Mike Kirwan, the finance director, said British Energy expected to pursue a progressive dividend policy, but admitted that payments may be uncovered by profits after tax for a number of years.

Analysts noted that the company's dividend policy depend-

ed on several factors, including

inflation, which affects the group's financing charges, and

prices in the electricity industry's trading 'pool' not falling by more than 5 per cent in real terms. "If one were to take the bear case on each of these fronts, it would probably knock this privatisation through the floor," the broker said.

Comment, page 17

## Bass holds talks with DTI over Carlsberg merger

JOHN SHEPHERD  
 Business News Editor

ass and Carlsberg Tetley are holding fresh talks with the Department of Trade and Industry in an attempt to overcome the seemingly insurmountable problems of merging their brewing interests. According to sources, representatives from both sides held talks with the DTI towards the end of last week, and more talks were planned for this week.

The DTI is understood to be driving a hard bargain before sanctioning the deal that will create the UK's biggest brewer, particularly in the light of the recent ditching of the Government's "big is beautiful" philosophy when PowerGen's and National Power's separate takeover bids for regional electricity companies were blocked.

Many drinks analysts at City

trading houses have become increasingly sceptical about the chances of the merger being consummated following the government's surprise flocking manoeuvre in the electricity sector. Some also believe that Bass may be trying to use this as a hard bargain, a tactic that could force Allied Domecq, owner of a half-share in Carlsberg Tetley, to walk away from the negotiating table.

The jungle drums have been

quiet in the City lately, one analyst said yesterday.

However, he still believed that Bass remained keen to reclaim pole position in UK brewing following its relegation to second place last summer when Scottish & Newcastle Breweries bought Courage.

The principal stumbling

block for the Bass deal with

Allied – apart from any dis-

agreement over price – is the

pocket of regional monopolies

in the Midlands and the North

that a straight merger would

yield. In some cases, Bass, as-

suming it buys Allied out of

Carlsberg Tetley, would hold

sway over market shares as

high as 70 per cent in some

areas.

Additionally, some competi-

tors have privately expressed

deep concern about the na-

tional market share of close to

40 per cent that a combined

Bass and Carlsberg Tetley

brewing operation would have.

Bass would also be able to

claim that it does not have

control over several beer brands it

produces under licence, which

would further reduce its stated

market share by around an-

other 5 percentage points.

Another prime problem is

placating the Danish owners of

Carlsberg who, according to sources close to the company, do not relish the prospect of becoming a bit player in the UK, a market that accounts for a large part of its sales and generates north of 10 per cent of its profits.

Relationships between Allied and Carlsberg have been far from sweet and light since Carlsberg Tetley was formed more than four years ago. The cultural differences have been big, one industry observer said. Carlsberg needs reassurance about supply deals for its own beers because it does not own any pubs. One analyst said that to ensure it was not cast adrift, Carlsberg would need to have a reasonable minority say of between 15 and 20 per cent of an enlarged Bass brewing empire.

Separately, Allied Domecq, which has suffered a series of unrelated setbacks in the last couple of years, will have to show a restless City audience that it has the ability to strike a good deal for investors.

Accepting anything less than £250m for its stake, say some observers, will raise eyebrows in the City and may well lead to a investor-led backlash against senior management at Allied, which is led by Sir Christopher Hogg, who recently took over the chairmanship from Michael Jackaman, and Tony Hales, chief executive.

The report also suggests allowing regions to issue bonds in order to raise funds for investment in economic development. "There are many regionally-based financial institutions, including local au-

thority pension funds, which would be likely to welcome the opportunity to add their own regional bonds to their portfolio of investments," it concludes.

The bond issues could be kept small as an initial experiment, it suggests. Germany, Spain and Italy already have regional government bonds, as well as the US and Canada.

"I hope what we suggest here would create more dynamism in the regions," Mr Millan said. He was at pains to stress that his commission had not called for new money, but rather the regionalisation of old money so that locally-elected politicians could set the priorities. The commission, which worked independently of the Labour Party, refrained from suggesting that most of the ex-

isting array of regional bodies such as Training and Enterprise Councils and Business Links be abolished or rationalised.

However, the report does favour "thinning out" local government quangos and making the remainder more accountable to local politicians. First for the chop would be English Partnerships, created in 1994 and mainly involved in brokering inward investment deals. English Partnerships' £280m in assets and £225m annual budget should be transferred to set up the Regional Development Agencies, the report recommends.

The Labour Party has already made a commitment to allowing capital receipts from council houses sales to be reinvested in housing.

John Prescott, page 13

## Telewest turns aggressive against BT

MATHEW HORSMAN  
 Media Editor

Britain's largest cable operator, Telewest, will today unveil a new corporate identity throughout the UK and detail a range of TV-plus-telephone and Internet packages in an aggressive bid to win new customers.

The company, which covers 3.7 million homes in its regional franchises, is expected to guarantee that it will undercut BT on every telephone call, and to offer up to six phone-and-TV options.

The news emerged as BT said yesterday it would spend £200m with partner MCI to expand its

10 cable TV channels and a telephone subscription. Other packages, some of which have already been trialled in the Midlands and the North-west, will range in price from about £20 to about £35 a month.

Telewest operates under different names in its main franchise areas, which include zones in Scotland, the North-east, the North-west, Avon, South London and the Midlands.

Starting this week, it intends to market all its fully owned franchises under the name Telewest Communications.

"We looked carefully at the way our customers reacted to us across the country," Alan

Michels, the company's chief executive, said yesterday. "We discovered that 60 per cent of those in our franchise areas had no spontaneous recall of the names of their operators."

The cable industry has only recently returned to favour among investors, following several months of negative publicity about its poor marketing prowess and low take-up rates.

Telewest, by far the largest operator, recently announced it would complete 65 per cent of its planned network by the end of the year, and would now concentrate on marketing its services.

"Cable operators need to

## Plans to let regions set development spending

DIANE COYLE  
 Economics Editor

Up to £1bn could be available for regional economic regeneration under a Labour government, according to a report launched yesterday by the party's regional policy commission.

New development agencies directed by elected regional assemblies should take over this

amount of existing funding from central government, the report, chaired by former EU commissioner Bruce Millan, recommends.

The report also suggests allowing regions to issue bonds in order to raise funds for investment in economic development.

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thority pension funds, which would be likely to welcome the opportunity to add their own regional bonds to their portfolio of investments," it concludes.

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## Norris: 'Barings resembled a Mad Hatter's tea party'

NIC CICUTI

Peter Norris, the disgraced former head of investment banking at Barings, yesterday admitted that none of the bank's main board members or those on its securities subsidiary at the time, had any knowledge of the workings of derivatives, the financial instrument that brought about the merchant bank's collapse.

He admitted before MPs that the atmosphere within Barings in relation to the activities of rogue trader Nick Leeson most closely resembled "a Mad Hatter's tea party".

"I offer the phrase in an attempt to find an analogy of how it feels, with hindsight, to know that what we were doing then was at variance with reality," Mr Norris told the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee.

During an intense grilling lasting more than two hours, and watched from the visitors' seats by Peter Baring, the bank's former chairman, Mr Norris said he accepted his "share of responsibility" for Barings' collapse.

But he denied suggestions from Committee members, including Diane Abbott and Quentin Davies, that his failure to spot Leeson's activities in Singapore was caused by the £1m bonus to his salary that he would have been awarded in March 1995, if the bank had maintained its profit target.

Mr Norris said: "If you are trying to imply that it had any impact towards my conduct of business ... you are wrong."

In a tense exchange with Mr Davies, he rejected suggestions of dishonesty over his denials that he had any inkling of what Leeson had been up to prior to the collapse.

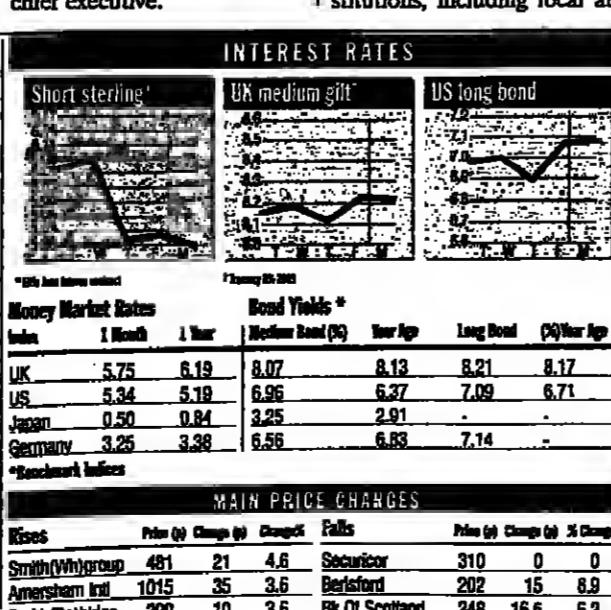
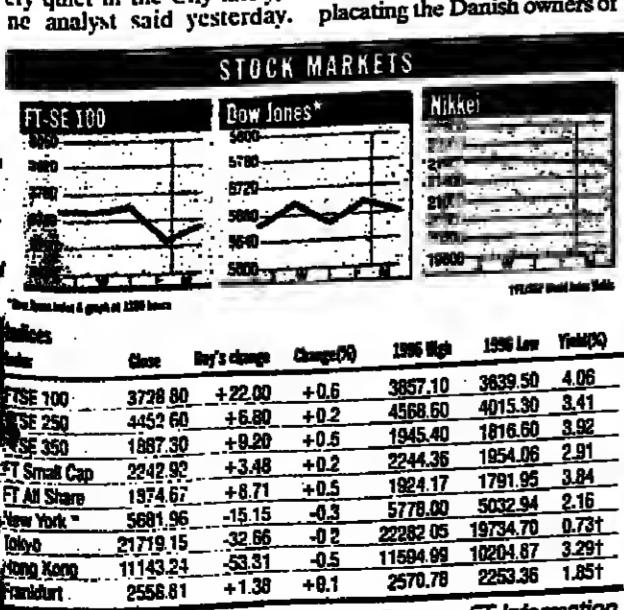
Mr Davies repeatedly quoted sections of the report by Singapore investigators which implied that they did not believe Mr Norris' version of events. The MP cited several instances where Mr Norris' evidence had been contradicted by other witnesses to the Singapore inquiry team.

"Is this not a devastating indictment of your honesty?" Mr Davies asked. "There is a lot in the Singapore report that is very soundly based and did happen," Mr Norris replied.

"There is also a great deal that is quite without foundation in fact and is conjectural."

Mr Norris admitted that controls over Leeson's activities were not as strict as they might have been, partly because regulatory systems appeared to be in place already and Barings' office in Singapore appeared to be making a substantial profit for the parent bank.

"Where consistent reporting comes through and reports are positive, critical faculties are less evident," he said. He added that outside regulators would, in any event, find it difficult to set up the structures needed to prevent a similar fraud taking place again, although the primary focus of what had happened was down in the rogue activities of one man, Nick Leeson.



## business

# Standard Life share sale cools Bank of Scotland bid hopes

NIC CICUTTI

Standard Life, the UK's largest mutual insurer, yesterday dashed hopes of a takeover battle for Bank of Scotland by announcing that it would dispose of "a substantial part" of its 32.2 per cent stake in the bank through a secondary offering.

The insurer said that Bank of Scotland would help with the marketing of its shares portfolio, worth an estimated £900m.

Standard Life's decision on the Bank of Scotland shares follows a four-week review of all options in relation to its stake in the bank, which it described as a "large proportion" of its UK equity portfolio.

Scott Bell, the insurer's group managing director, said: "We continue to have confidence in Bank of Scotland's future prospects and strategies, but following our review of the options available to us, we have now decided in the interests of our policyholders to rebalance our equity portfolio."

The decision helped to cool widespread speculation over Bank of Scotland's future as an independent force in UK banking. Shares in the bank dropped by 16.5p to 248p when the news emerged.

Potential bidders, tipped for the one third stake in the bank included its rival, Royal Bank of Scotland, together with Abbey National, Lloyds and a number of foreign banks, especially from the US.

Standard Life's move, which

is believed to have caught Bank of Scotland unawares, led to the resignation of Sir Bruce Pattullo, the bank's governor, from the insurer's board.

It is understood that Bank of Scotland was keen to see the shares disposed of through a secondary offering, thus allowing it to maintain its independence, rather than being sold in one single or several large parcels.

Sir Bruce said yesterday that the bank had performed strongly and had confidence about its future.

"Naturally we are sad that Standard Life has decided to reduce its stake, but recognise that the growth in the value of the investment has resulted in a need for it rebalance its portfolio," he said.

He added that he would comment on Bank of Scotland's current trading at the bank's annual general meeting later today.

In April, the bank reported a strong climb in pre-tax profits for last year from £268.7m to £449.7m – a result that was accompanied by a increase in the final dividend from 3.18p to 3.69p.

Although shares in Bank of Scotland fell after Standard Life announced how it would dispose of its stake, analysts said they were not too concerned by the drop.

A secondary offering undermined bid hopes in the stock, dealers said: "Admittedly it is not easy to find someone who can afford to buy the Bank of



Sad but resigned: Sir Bruce Pattullo remains confident about the bank's future

Scotland, given its size, and [that] a premium would be required," one said.

"But my sense is that this just kicks the shares back down to

where they were before all the news hit." Before the announcement a month ago that Standard Life was looking to dispose of the stock, Bank of

Scotland's share price stood at 242p. By the end of that week it had leapt to around 270p and reached a high of 286.5p on 21 May.

## Acquisitions on the menu as profits flow at Unigate

### THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY NIGEL COPE

After last year's impressive rise, shares in Unigate have looked wobbly this year and lost 10 per cent of their value at the time of the BSE scare in March. But things are starting to look up.

The sale of the 29 per cent stake in Nutricia in December for a net gain of £21.2m has transformed the company's balance sheet leaving net cash of £170m. Since the year-end, the troublesome Black Eyed Pea chain of US restaurants have been sold, requiring a total provision of £59.5m. The Taco Bueno chain will be off-loaded this year leaving Unigate concentrated on two main businesses, fresh foods and distribution.

With the funds likely to be used for an acquisition rather than a share buy-back, the market wasted no time trying to second-guess a possible target. Shares in Gest, one of its troublesome banana business, stormed 20p ahead. Dairy Crest, the foods group that is coming to the market valued at £37.4m, would be an easily digestible bite. There is a hint that a European deal could also be on the cards as Unigate has named its recently acquired French business St Javel Europe, even though it only includes the French division. The City would prefer a food deal, but an acquisition to bolster the Wincanton logistics business is also possible, with Tibbett & Britten a candidate.

Acquisition talk meant Unigate's results took something of a backseat. Profits jumped from £58m to £99m in the year to March though this was largely due to profits on disposals including the Nutricia stake and the Giltpur exhibition business. At the operating level, profits rose 12.2 per cent to £114m. As expected, profits in the dairies business fell from £38m to £35m. Doorstep sales of milk fell 16 per cent during the year but the fall is slowing. Milk supply to the supermarkets remains under pressure as the grocers squeeze supplier margins. Chief executive Ross Buckland is still angry about Milk Marque's price rises and supports inquiries that could see the situation corrected.

European Foods had a good year boosted by the first full-year contribution from the French business. Malton, the UK's largest supplier of bacon, ham and pork, also performed well, though the benefit from the beef scare will be felt in the current year's profits. Wincanton Logistics, the distribution division, added

new customers and has invested in new automated warehouse.

Analysts are sticking with a profits forecast of £1.25m. With the shares up 8p to 417p, that puts Unigate's stock on a forward rating of just over 10. This is a discount to the sector which would make the shares look cheap if Mr Buckland pulls off a decent deal. With little downside the shares are worth a look.

### Little shine at Salvesen

After six years of restructuring Christian Salvesen, chief executive Dr Chris Masters would have hoped to be a lot further along than this. A raft of businesses have been sold, including everything from brick-making to pollution-control equipment. What remains is the distribution business, the Agreko power generation and temperature control division.

The company is trying to reduce its dependency on the grocery sector although it still accounts for 31 per cent of the division's profits. It has been introducing more flexible working practices and investing heavily in new technology. Profits were hit by a £1.5m charge to cover redundancy costs associated with the shift to seven-day working required to fit in with retailers' Sunday trading.

With costs reducing and the supermarket group showing more willingness to work with suppliers, there are signs that the worst is over. Elsewhere, the Agreko business had a good year, pushing up profits by a healthy 19.5 per cent to £30.7m.

For all this there are signs that Salvesen may be about to lift itself off the bottom as improvements in its logistics division start to reap dividends.

### UNIGATE : AT A GLANCE

Market value: £1bn, share price 417p

Five-Year record 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996

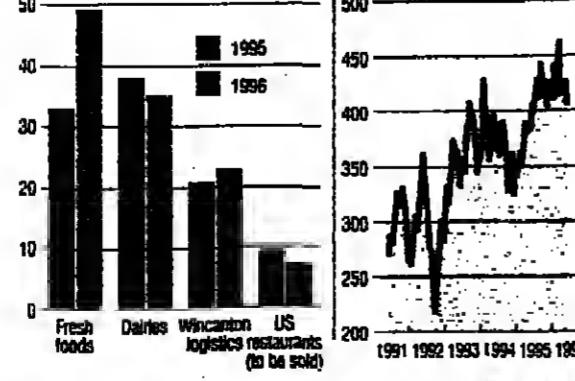
Turnover (£m) 2.0 1.9 1.9 1.9 2.1

Pre-tax profits (£m) 65.7 101.4 102.4 58.3 29

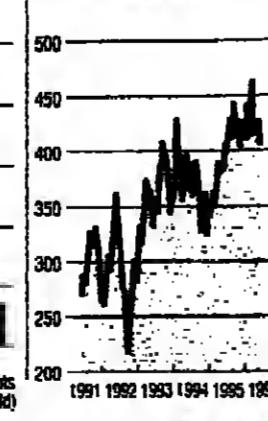
Earnings per share (pence) 23.4 31.3 31.4 19.8 11.32

Dividends per share (pence) 15.3 16.1 17.3 18.2 19.2

### Operating profits (£m) (continuing operations)



### Share price pence



Henderson Crosthwaite has increased its profits forecast to £81m. With the shares unchanged at 243p and on a forward rating of 13 there are some attractions. But not one to over-excite. Hold.

### Berisford feels the heat

It is hard to imagine that Berisford was once a glamour stock. The transformation from a diversified, loss-making commodities business into a more focused kitchens, joinery and catering equipment group initially won many followers in the City.

From a low of 48p when a new management team came on board in 1992, the shares touched 260p last year as the company bounced back into the black for the first time since 1989 and resumed dividend payments. The improvement continued into the first half, with pre-tax profits rising by 7 per cent to £1.9m and the payout jumping 50 per cent to 1.5p.

But the two legs on which the Berisford hand wagon now stands – kitchen and joinery division Magnet and US commercial-oven maker Weihalt – look a bit wobbly.

Magnet, bought for £58m two years ago, remains very exposed to the fragile UK housing market. In the six months to March, housing starts fell 16 per cent while transactions were 15 per cent lower on the same period a year ago. Building products also suffered, sending the division's operating profits down to £2.3m from £9.5m (£94.5m). Prospects for building products in the UK remain depressed, though there are the first tentative signs of an increase in domestic kitchens.

Weihalt, picked up for £18m last year, fared better. It almost tripled profits to £1.8m as turnover soared to £440m from £46.5m. Piggy-backing on the expansion of fast-food restaurants ought to make sense, but even here Berisford cannot expect a smooth ride.

While the chains continue to go from strength to strength at the expense of traditional eateries, price competition in over-ranges, the core product is intensifying. Berisford is switching to fryers, grills, steamers and microwaves, but the transition will incur a £1.6m cost this year.

In-fill acquisitions in bedroom products and PVCu plastics are earmarked, though chief executive Alan Bowkett is unhappy about some of the prices being asked.

Pre-tax profits of £33m put the shares, down 15p to 202p yesterday, on a forward multiple of 13, yielding 3.1 per cent. Unattractive.

## Brokers relinquish circular saw

### CITY DIARY

JOHN WILLCOCK

No more brokers' circulars! Five of the UK's largest stockbroking firms have decided to do their bit for saving the rainforests by delivering research electronically, straight to the desk tops of fund managers. The brokers, which include SBC Warburg and NatWest Securities, reckon that last year alone they published more than 18,000 pieces of research which used over 1,000 tons of paper pulp – representing 19,500 trees. They also employed more than 2.3 million individual courier runs to deliver the stuff, generating up to 10,000 tons of Kawasaki 250 exhaust fumes. First Call Research Direct is the outfit delivering the material screen-to-screen. It may be a great idea, but it's a sad day for ropey motorbike enthusiasts.

Now that Lord Kingsdown has retired as Governor of the Bank of England he has more time to devote to his

I think it was Winston Churchill who asked, after being appointed Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, "What is a Duchy and where is Lancaster?" Anyway, Roger Freeman is the present incumbent, and Minister of Public Services to boot. Mr Freeman is also the minister responsible for implementing the Government's policy on Mad Cow Disease and the eradication thereof. The National Farmers' Union has invited the minister to address its north-eastern area on the subject, and obviously has a very clear idea of the Duchy's duties. In its announcement, the NFU dubs Mr Freeman simply "Mr BSE."

Howard Seymour, head of BZW's construction research team, recently sent his deputy, Chris Grant, on an

analysts' trip to Denver, Colorado. A dozen analysts were there to bear a presentation by the giant construction firm Camas. The analysis took themselves off to a local Denver night spot called the I-Zone – where Mr Grant was refused entry. Apparently the doorman refused to believe Mr Grant was over 20 without suitable identification. Perhaps this explains Mr Grant's nickname among fellow analysts – "Student".

NatWest Ventures has just completed an MBO of an MBO – a £20m secondary buyout of the Solicitors' Law Stationery Society. This supplier of paper and biros to the legal profession is better known as "Oyez", and was formerly owned by that famous upholder of the law, Robert Maxwell.

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'It all started 50 years ago, down there by plant number one when I found 40 million pounds under a rock.'

### COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Asic (F)	137m (108m)	10.2m (8.21m)	30.1p (26.9p)	8.4p (-)
Berisford (F)	243m (168m)	11.9m (11.1m)	6.6p (5.7p)	1.5p (-)
Carve UK (F)	8.85m (6.55m)	1.66m (1.16m)	3.16p (2.07p)	0.28p (-)
James Cropper (F)	57.6m (49.7m)	1.85m (2.57m)	13.7a (19.6a)	3.3p (3.7p)
Devon Valley Water (F)	11.8m (11.5m)	5.8m (4.46m)	40.32p (24.54p)	14.5p (10.6p)
Electrocomp (F)	560m (472m)	99.2m (86.1m)	15.2p (13.7p)	6.6p (5.625p)
Electronic Data (F)	7.98m (5.33m)	1.5m (1.21m)	3.92p (3.55p)	0.65p (0.607p)
Everest Heritage (F)	16.3m (14.7m)	0.45m (0.40m)	1.5p (1.4p)	0.45p (-)
Globe (F)	95.2m (85.9m)	3.75m (14.5m)	6.15p (15.97p)	4.12p (-)
Field Group (F)	201m (159m)	18.2m (15.4m)	24.2p (23.2p)	8.5p (-)
Full Circle Inds (F)	7.2m (6.02m)	-0.65m (4.98m)	-0.82p (-1.98p)	0.1p (-)
DC International (F)	1.38m (0.64m)	0.21m (0.08m)	1.7p (1.6p)	nil (nil)
Renold (F)	175m (149m)	16.7m (11.5m)	20.8p (13.6p)	4.5p (-)
Rowthorne Seac (F)	13.8m (12.9m)	3.71m (2.75m)	18.6p (14.65p)	2.57p (-)
Christie Software (F)	700m (649m)	77.5m (104m)	18.8p (25.8p)	8.65p (-)
Globe (F)	148m (117m)	12.4m (5.74m)	30.7a (3.2p)	4p (-)
Sliman (F)	8.92m (7.58m)	0.30m (0.21m)	2.1p (1.6p)	1.3p (1.2p)
Trust (F)	15.9m (13.5m)	1.31m (1.32m)	8.15p (13.42p)	1.5p (1.4p)
Unigate (F)	2.13m (1.88m)	28m (53.8m)	113.3p (19.8p)	19.2p (-)
Witney (F)	18.8m (18.7m)	0.71m (0.95m)	4.02p (5.03p)	10.1p (-)



## COMMENT

The Fayed factor, however many top names and celebrity non-execs are recruited to the board, is going to hang like a spectre over any flotation attempt'

## Harrods to float at £2bn? Pull the other one

When Mirror Group Newspapers was floated on the stock market, the issue had to be priced to reflect what advisers called "the Max factor". This recognised that whatever was done to ring-fence the company from Robert Maxwell's other business interests, it made no difference. So long as the great man remained in situ, investors would demand a discount that reflected his checkered business record and his well documented tendency towards fraud. As it turned out, the market's view was wholly vindicated. Not until Mr Maxwell had gone and all vestiges of his legacy swept away, did the shares begin trading at what might be considered a fair value for the business.

Nobody would suggest that Mohamed Al Fayed, owner of Harrods, has anything very much in common with Robert Maxwell, but there is one thing they do share; they have both been severely and publicly criticised by Department of Trade inspectors. By the time he floated his company on the stock market, Mr Maxwell had largely erased this from his copy book. When anyone asked him about it, he falsely claimed that the courts had overturned the inspectors' findings, and he tended to sue those who questioned his *bona fides*. Even so, few of those charged with managing other people's money forgot those damning Board of Trade findings. Every time he tried to tap the capital markets, they extracted their pound of flesh.

Mr Fayed, who is considering floating Harrods on the stock market, will find him-

self in a similar position. In 1988 the Department of Trade and Industry said of the Fayed's that they dishonestly misrepresented their origins, their wealth, their business interests and their resources to the Secretary of State, the Office of Fair Trading, the press, the House of Fraser board and House of Fraser shareholders, and their own advisers. In other words, they lied. Like Robert Maxwell before them, they have attempted to overturn these findings through the courts. The campaign has not been without some success, for the sheer weight of the legal and public relations effort has convinced many that the Fayed's were badly treated and the Board of Trade report was flawed. However, the inspectors' findings have not yet been struck from the register.

Mohamed Al Fayed would hardly be the first successful businessman to be accused of lying. And anyway, say advisers, it was all a long time ago. Even so, the Fayed factor, however many top names and celebrity non-execs are recruited to the board, is going to hang like a spectre over any flotation attempt. What makes this flotation doubly more difficult for Mr Fayed's no doubt hand-somely paid advisers is that he is also demanding a valuation - about £2bn - which looks like pure fantasy. Even without the Fayed factor, investors would never want anything as fancy as this.

It is claimed that Harrods will, by the turn of the century, be making annual profits of £100m. That's going it from last year's level

of around £70m, but let's be charitable and take it as read. Harrods would then stand on prospective multiple of about 30. Top international fashion businesses might just about command such a valuation. Department stores, even when the same is that of Harrods, do not. As British Energy and Railtrack are proving, anything can be floated if the price is right. But Mr Fayed will not get £2bn for his company. Many will boycott him altogether.

### Paying through the nose for common sense

The world is changing so significantly that competing in the near future will be very different from the way it has been in the recent past ... The words are taken from a recently published book by two consultants at McKinsey & Company, but they could have been said by just about any management consultant over the past 20 years.

All the same, statements like this have struck fear into the hearts of Britain's boardrooms and made the occupants more ready than ever before to call on consultants to help them cope with the chaos and confusion of a changing world. Management consultancy is said to generate up to £2.5bn a year in UK billings nowadays. The industry encompasses a huge range of talent, from the totally incompetent to the highly accomplished, but it is McKinsey which has

acquired the mystique of the place to go to if you are being really serious. In recent months, Shell and fellow Anglo-Dutch multinational Unilever have publicised the firm's role in formulating their new structures. Now, the BBC's reorganisation for the digital age is reminding us of the help it has been giving to John Birt and his colleagues.

Much of its success can be put down to its policy of encouraging its people to leave its well-paid, high-pressure confines for positions where they can influence people and hire their old associates. Asda chief Archie Norman, Bank of England deputy-governor Howard Davies and CBI director general Adair Turner are all like best-selling author and management guru Tom Peters, alumnus.

But it also owes something to business people's belief in quick fixes. In going after McKinsey they are doing the modern equivalent of buying IBM because no one ever got fired for doing that. They are a bright lot and no doubt deserve whatever they are paid. But ask any of the handful of British companies that have managed to be successful over decades rather than a few years about their commitment to any of the fads management consultants like to hook their wagons to and as likely as not they will look at you blank-faced. Sure, they listen to the consultants, but they also make up their own minds. There is a limit to the number of times you can reinvent the wheel. As one senior consultant admitted recently, "good

consultancy is essentially common sense". How strange that executives feel they have to pay so dearly for a commodity like this.

### British Energy gets it with both barrels

We were obviously a little premature when we said in Saturday's business comment that neither Labour nor the environmentalists was particularly bothered about nuclear privatisation. While it is true that neither has been particularly vocal on the matter in recent months, they were giving it both barrels yesterday, as the British Energy prospectus was published. What they said about it distilled down to just one thing though: the taxpayer is being ripped off. Now there's a thing. It is what Labour has said about virtually every privatisation to date. The effect, invariably, is to give the marketing process an unexpected frost, for if the taxpayer is losing, someone else is gaining.

Whoever you believe about all this, there is no doubt that British Energy is a very odd sort of company. As an investment, it is like a wasting asset, for dividends are to be paid for the foreseeable future out of capital. If you never expect to build another nuclear power station again, which is true of British Energy, then this seems not a bad policy, but it is one many investors will have some difficulty getting to grips with. Even so, British Energy has been priced to sell.

## Chiltern MBO approved

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR  
Transport Correspondent

The franchise to run the Chiltern Railway, the most modern commuter line on the rail network, has been won by M40 Trains, the management buyout team.

The team, led by Adrian Shooter and backed by John Laing and 3I, has been announced by Roger Salmon, the franchising director, as the preferred bidder to run Chiltern which operates trains out of Marylebone to commuter towns such as Aylesbury and High Wycombe, and services to Birmingham.

It is thought the winning team has plans to expand and speed up the Birmingham service, which takes two and a half hours, providing real competition for the West Coast Main Line. There are also suggestions of a shuttle service to London suburbs using older trains.

The line was improved under the "total route modernisation" plan in the early 1990s as an experiment to discover if more reliable services in modern trains attracted more customers to rail and the scheme has proved hugely successful, making the franchise one of the most sought after on the network.

The victory by the management buyout team reverses the recent trend of in-house bids losing out to competition outside the industry.

Final terms of M40's bid will be negotiated over the next fortnight, and the MBO team will probably start operating services within a couple of months.



One of the few remaining corporate bastions where one person holds the dual roles of chairman and chief executive has fallen. Smiths Industries, the defence electronics company and one of the leading 100 companies in the UK, yesterday announced that Keith Butler-Wheathouse (right) will become chief executive, succeeding Sir Roger Hum (left) who will still remain

chairman. Mr Butler-Wheathouse, 50, joins from the Swedish Saab Automobile company, where he has been chief executive for four years. Sir Roger said: "With all the advantages of an outsider coming in, he will bring fresh thinking and vision to our affairs." No salary details are yet being released. Sir Roger last year earned £644,000, including bonuses.

## Citic cuts stake in HK Telecom

STEPHEN VINES  
Hong Kong

A fresh bout of uncertainty hit the Cable & Wireless-controlled Hongkong Telecom with news yesterday that its main Chinese shareholder, Citic Pacific, had cut its stake in the colony's telecommunications company from 10 to 8 per cent.

Citic Pacific is the locally listed arm of Peking's largest investment company, the China International Trust and Investment Corp, which recently raised its stake in Cathay Pacific Airways from 10 to 25 per cent

amid suggestions that it would eventually take control of the airline away from the British-run Swire Pacific.

The sale of its Hongkong Telecom stake raised some HK\$350m (£252m), which will contribute to the HK\$6.3bn Citic Pacific needs to raise for the Cathay deal agreed in April and for a clutch of infrastructure projects in China.

This is the second time this year that Citic Pacific has sold down its stake in Hongkong Telecom. In January it raised about the same amount when reducing its share ownership

from 12 to 10 per cent. When it first acquired Hongkong Telecom shares in 1983 Citic's holding stood at 20 per cent.

However, the sale cannot be clearly seen as a sign of retreat from Hongkong Telecom because Citic Pacific makes frequent forays into the market to raise cash. In September 1995 it cut its stake in Cathay before returning eight months later to take a far larger share.

The Chinese-controlled company says it sold the shares in order to "refocus" its investment strategy, however it retains a holding in the telecommunications network, China United Telecommunications Co. in which Citic Pacific's parent has a significant share, would be buying into Hongkong Telecom.

DIANE COYLE  
Economics Editor

Prices charged by manufacturers at the factory gate fell in May for the first time since August 1992, according to figures yesterday which lent support to Kenneth Clarke's surprise cut last week in the cost of borrowing.

There was further good cheer for the Chancellor in news that the recovery in retail spending strengthened last month, although this weighed against his interest rate decision. Sales growth at big stores was the second-highest since it started its monthly survey, the British Retail Consortium said.

Most analysts believe growing evidence of a consumer recovery led Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, to oppose last week's quarter point reduction in base rates.

Mr George said yesterday there was room for "minor disagreements" in the monetary framework.

Economists said the slowdown in producer price inflation would be echoed in lower retail price inflation in the next 12 months unless retailers took the opportunity to increase their profit margins.

Adam Cole, an economist at James Capel, said: "The producer price figures provide just the sort of justification for last week's base rate cut Mr Clarke

will have been hoping for." Prices charged by manufacturers at the factory gate fell in May for the first time since August 1992, according to figures yesterday which lent support to Kenneth Clarke's surprise cut last week in the cost of borrowing.

"Core" prices, excluding energy and food, grew at an annual rate of only 2.4 per cent, although they edged up in May.

Prices paid for materials and fuel fell 0.5 per cent, taking their annual rate of increase from 3.2 per cent in April.

The increase - in the coldest May on record - represented a significant advance on the 4.1 per cent average growth of the previous three months. Housing-related items such as china, furniture and DIY products did particularly well.

So did clothing, with knitwear purchases offsetting disappointing sales of warm-weather clothes. Vitamins sold well at the expense of sun creams.

Andrew Higginson, chairman of the BRC's economic committee, said: "Last week's modest interest rate reduction was welcome and is a further step in the right direction."

Andrew Sentance, a London Business School economist who advises the BRC, said: "On current trends we are heading for the strongest period of consumer growth seen in the UK since the late 1980s." He added, though, that the present environment was very different from the boom conditions then.

The good news on consumer spending was the rise in annual sales growth at 75 big retailers monitored by the British Retail Consortium.

The value of like-for-like sales was 6.2 per cent higher in

## 2 FOR 1 ODEON CINEMA TICKET OFFER WITH THE INDEPENDENT



Spy Hard (certificate PG), stars Leslie Nielsen as Agent WD-40, a.k.a. Steele - Dick Steele in a comedy of high-voltage adventure, high-tech gadgetry and low-key humour.

In Toy Story (certificate PG), six year old Andy's toys have a life of their own when left alone. Led by Andy's favourite toy Woody, the fearless pull-string cowboy doll, the toys live a quiet life of dedication to their master. All this is thrown into jeopardy on Andy's birthday, the most dreaded day in the life of a toy, when the fear of being replaced by another toy can become a reality.

Up Close and Personal (certificate 15) stars Michelle Pfeiffer as Tally Atwater, an articulate, sophisticated and charming newscaster. She is a familiar and comforting face to millions of network TV news viewers. Going from small-town weathergirl to prime-time network anchor she was aided and abetted by Warren Justice (Robert Redford) a brilliant older newsman, her mentor and lover. Their romance is intense and exhilarating yet each breaking story threatens to drive them apart.



Up Close and Personal

### TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. The 'free' ticket may only have a value equal to, or less than, the purchased ticket (i.e. the purchase of a child's ticket will not entitle an adult to free admission).

2. The voucher is only valid for admission to any film showing at Odeon Cinemas between 3 June - 13 June 1996.

3. The voucher is only valid when three differently numbered tokens are attached from The Independent or Independent on Sunday.

4. This offer may not be used in conjunction with any other offer or discount.

5. Odeon standard terms and conditions of purchase apply.

6. The voucher may not be used for telephone bookings and does not give the holder preference over other customers.

7. Odeon Cinemas reserve the right to refuse admission.

8. This offer does not apply to Odeon Leicester Square & Mezzanine, and the Odeon West End.

9. Photocopies of tokens are not acceptable.

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# Bogey of inflation in danger of being deflated

Could inflation revive, or is deflation set to rule? This is the great question affecting not just all financial markets and all companies, but all of us as savers and borrowers. The financial markets (and I suspect most of us as individuals) make an explicit assumption that inflation will tick along at about 3 per cent for the foreseeable future, at least in the UK. That is why it typically costs between 7 and 8 per cent for a mortgage: 3 per cent for inflation, and another 4 to 5 per cent real cost.

But maybe this will be wrong. The annual inflationary outcome could average anything between zero (or maybe a negative, for that happened for much of the last century) and the high single figures if inflation revives. Most professional investors, if pressed, would expect the outcome to err on the downside. At the moment the risks of deflation appear greater than that of revived inflation.

But that judgement too, may be wrong. Perhaps inflation, in the short term at least, could come up quite fast. Perhaps, on the other hand, deflation could become much more serious than it seems now.

These twin dangers are the key points tackled in the new Bank for International Settlements annual report, published yesterday. For people unfamiliar with this publication, it is perhaps the best annual survey of the state of the world economy that anyone produces. It is a central bankers' view for the BIS is the central bankers' bank.

Perhaps it is that, or maybe something about being located in an ivory tower in Basle that gives a clarity and judgement to its views – or maybe, less charitably, the BIS simply has a number of high-quality people without a lot else to do. Be that as



## ECONOMIC VIEW

HAMISH McRAE

it may, for anyone interested in the interaction between financial markets and the world economy the BIS annual report is very good.

There is usually a theme to each year's commentary and this year it is that the moment of victory over inflation carries dangers of a different kind.

Price stability, the Holy Grail of central bankers, "has been reached, or almost reached, in a large number of countries in the industrial as well as the developing world". In short there is the danger of disinflation: "... disinflationary forces will continue to exert an influence, as will the effects of excess capacity which still characterises many of the industrial countries other than the United States." There is still an in-

terest in, for many years. With a nice long perspective, the BIS likens the present situation to that of the early 1920s when Keynes and Wickson noted that central banks should be ready to resist both inflation and deflation.

This reflection in itself is interesting, for throughout the post-war period it has been assumed that the appropriate stance for central banks is to lean against inflation. That position is still reflected in what central bankers always say, though not necessarily in what they do. Now the annual report of the central bankers club is warning of the other danger. That is a significant shift, reflecting a changed reality.

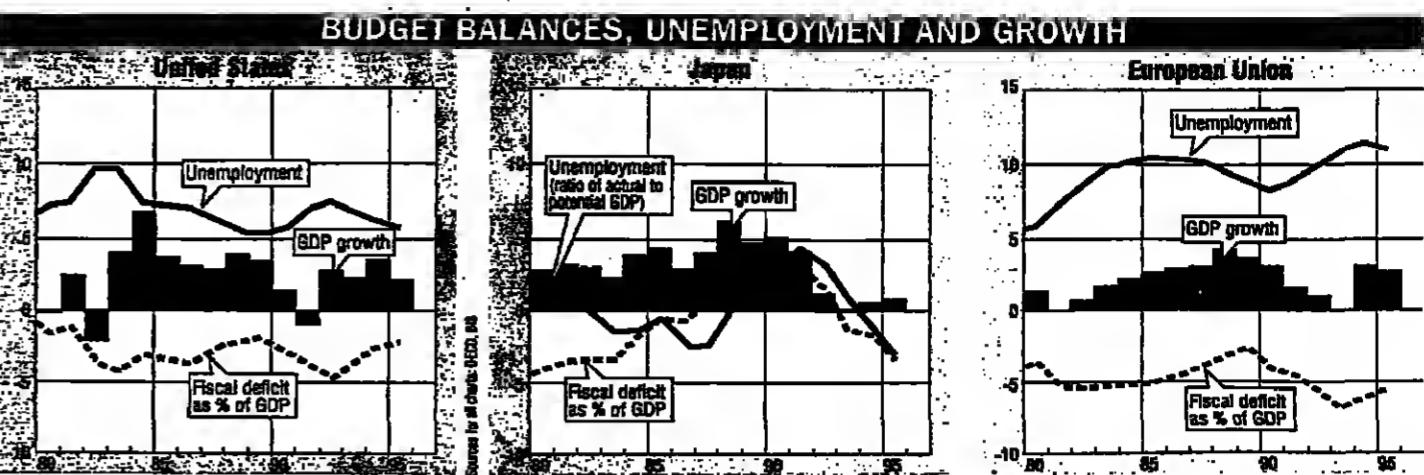
Besides, the BIS points out, the two most important macro-economic problems in the world have dis-

tinuity threat, and this comes from two rather different sources. In North America the economy is close to full capacity; in Europe the level of structural unemployment may create such pressures that inflation is seen as a way out. In addition, many developing countries have high inflation. But on balance the forces bearing on inflation – those pushing it up and those pushing it down – are more balanced than

flationary implications. These are fiscal deficits and reform of labour markets, particularly in Europe.

The graphs, drawn from the BIS report, show these two problems for the three main developed country economic zones, the US, Japan and the European Union.

As you can see, the fiscal problem (the dotted line) is common to all three areas, now that Japan has plunged into deficit. We now have lower unem-



BUDGET BALANCES, UNEMPLOYMENT AND GROWTH

Price stability, the Holy Grail of central bankers, has been reached'

ployment than the other large European economies thanks to labour market reforms which have made it possible to expand the economy without running into pay pressures. But for much of the 1980s, only the unemployment was evident: the short-term correcting a fiscal deficit probably has disinflationary effects.

The unemployment threat is also

highlighted. Here the three zones

have very different experience:

US has unemployment under control; in Japan it is concealed (the BIS

took the ratio of actual to potential GDP as a measure of slack in the labour market, rather than actual published unemployment); and in Europe it is dreadful and getting more so. The danger is that the method of concealing these European levels of unemployment – freeing up labour markets – will in the short-run make the problem appear worse. The BIS does not say so, but UK experience is interesting here. We now have lower unem-

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# Sport

**EURO 96**

## The comparative ease with which Germany overcame the Czechs was further proof of their superiority in development

As a consequence of the abuse he has sometimes suffered in popular German newspapers, Bert Vogts's relations with reporters have been subject to frequent emotional disturbance. No, Vogts said calmly on the eve of Euro '96, he does not find the burden of history troublesome.

Vogts's most persistent critics interpret this as a challenge. They press Germany's national coach to admit the pressure of emulation, supposing that if he can just about get through the days the nights must make him nervous.

It is not just Germany's remarkable record of victory in four World Cups and three European Championships but that all Vogts's predecessors, Sepp Herberger, Helmut Schön, Jupp Derwall and Franz

Beckenbauer, were winners. "Bertie keeps on insisting that it won't be a big disappointment personally if his name isn't added to that list, but I don't believe him for one moment," a veteran German football correspondent, Hartmut Scherzer, said before Germany played the Czech Republic at Old Trafford on Sunday.

German football has no patience with illusions. In reaching the final of the 1992 European Championship and the World Cup quarter-finals two years ago, Vogts has proved a capable successor to the charismatic Beckenbauer but much more is required of him in the present campaign. "I'm sure that most countries would celebrate getting to the final of a big football tournament, but Germany have taken part in so many that if we lose, the coach is no

longer safe," Scherzer added. "For example, Derwall won the European Championship in 1980, but didn't reach the final two years later."

Upholding the coach's right to ignore speculative intrusions, Vogts is discreetly vague about his team's prospects. "I was pleased with a lot of our play but there is room for improvement," he said shortly after Sunday's match.

Probably the football experience that brought Vogts most pleasure was playing at right-back when West Germany defeated the Netherlands in the 1974 World Cup final. Today's crop of players may not be able to match that team for individual excellence but they could turn out to be an excitingly modern combination. Dangerous conclusions are all too

apart from Thomas Hässler standing much short of six feet.

Typically, you may think, there were some dissenting British voices, including that of the former Manchester United and Scotland defender Martin Buchan, who expected more from the Germans technically. "They look very fit and strong, but frankly I was a bit disappointed," he said. "Of course, with Jürgen Klinsmann back from suspension they are bound to be a better team but I didn't see a lot that would frighten me if I was coming up against them."

What you cannot get away from is that despite Klinsmann's popularity when turning out for Tottenham Hotspur, the successes Germany have achieved are resented in this country, especially I think since

they reached the 1990 World Cup final by defeating England in a penalty shoot-out.

But nobody can avoid the fact that Germany have been impressively consistent for 30 years while England have made very little if any real progress. The contrast between England's muddled effort against Switzerland and the comparative ease with which Germany overcame the Czechs in what was thought to be a difficult opening game for them was further proof of their superiority in development.

But for the fussy refereeing that makes the schoolteacher David Elleray irritatingly conspicuous – clearly a man among boys and a boy among men – and broke up the flow of a game that was never remotely violent, Germany may have added

to the impression that they are justifiably installed as favourites.

"I don't know anything about that," Vogts said. "I think this is a good team, a good squad and the players are well prepared, better than for the last World Cup when we had a problem with the conditions. To get so many yellow cards was a disappointment because we should have learned quickly from the referee's attitude."

A fanciful theory is that the Germans have given up on individual brilliance: no great stars, a sound method, powerful running with the ball, and collective authority. These are no bad things anyway, but in Hässler, the sweeper, Matthias Sammer, and Andreas Möller they have men who could elevate Vogts to the status of his predecessors.

## England's Dunkirk inspiration

A leading stress expert yesterday predicted that England would win the European Championship – despite reports that Terry Venables' squad are both mentally and physically exhausted.

"I will certainly be putting some money on them now," says Cary Cooper, professor of organisational psychology at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (Umsit), said. "I think the Dunkirk spirit will take over and the team will take off."

England, and Paul Gascoigne in particular, came under fire for the way Switzerland were allowed to get back into their opening Euro '96 Group A game on Saturday and secure a point in a 1-1 draw. Professor Cooper, a Manchester City supporter, said: "The expectations are lower as England have drifted out of the betting. But they can work this to their advantage and I am sure Terry Venables knows this. He is a good people manager and I wouldn't be surprised if he told his players to just go out and enjoy themselves.

"That's what I would do. That way you have a better chance of winning and I am convinced England will go on and prosper. I can't believe the pressure we have put on the team. It is astronomical and we have really hurt it up too much."

"People expect a lot of our sportsmen. This country has declined as a military and economic power: the empire is crumbling. Yet we expect success. It is part of our tradition, even though we are no longer a major force in the world."

"So we look for success in other fields, such as sport, and football in particular. When we don't get what we deserve there is an outcry," Cooper added. "It's unfair to heap all the blame on the players and say they should be able to perform well because they earn huge salaries. I heard someone say they should all burn their wage packets at the end of the pitch. That's nonsense."

"It is wrong to blame the players for the salaries they earn. That is determined by the marketplace and how much players in other countries, like

Italy and Holland, get paid. We have a lot of good players in this country but we love to criticise and put people down. We should leave Gascoigne alone and just appreciate the talents of one of the best players this country has produced."

Gary Neville, arguably England's best player against Switzerland, agrees that the puncturing of the balloon of expectation could work in the team's favour. "Of course we all wanted to win, all wanted to put on a really good performance, but it might not be such a bad thing," said Neville, who rejoined his squad-mates yesterday after a 48-hour break from the demands of the competition. "Some people are saying that it will put more pressure on us before the Scotland game, but on the contrary I think it might work the other way."

"I honestly think that it will take some of the pressure off us. We still have to win but, because we didn't play too well on Saturday, the level of expectation from the fans and the press might not be too great now."

The Manchester United youngster argued that the Switzerland game had also been an invaluable experience for a team containing seven players having their first experience of tournament football. "It was the first time I've played in a tournament, the first match of the tournament, the first match of the Championship as well, and it was really difficult for us," he said. "One of the first things we said to each other in the dressing room on Saturday was that we simply didn't come out in the second half against Switzerland. We weren't at the races."

"I don't think any of us would really argue with that. We certainly couldn't blame the heat, because it was probably the coolest day of the week, and we were quite happy in that respect. We just didn't play as we can, as we wanted to," he added, while agreeing that the demands on the England players had mounted in the last few days before a game they had been expected to win quite comfortably.

Now, aged 29, he has been handed the ultimate accolade: selection ahead of Baggio in the national team as partner to Fabrizio Ravanelli. It has not been one of Arrigo Sacchi's more popular decisions but then few have been. To Sacchi's detractors, Zola epitomises the work ethic which the coach holds so dear at the expense, they believe, of flair.

But that is to do Zola, a player of sharp skills and flawless technique, a disservice, even if to hear him talking it could be the coach himself. Zola, who was included in Sacchi's first selection in November 1991, deems that the accent on "team players" within the squad has been to the detriment of the skill factor, and as a consequence which the absence of individualists such as Gianluca Vialli and Beppe Signori may good players," he said. "We work a lot and when a group works a lot they get results. We are prepared to work for that success and if we do not win this tournament I promise you we will play well."

Such conviction is all the more impressive coming from one as



Target practice: Gianfranco Zola, Italy's attacking linchpin, hones his free-kick routines yesterday

Photograph: Neal Simpson/Empics

## Zola aiming for the perfect 10

When it comes to inheriting hand-me-downs, the No 10 shirt can sometimes be more trouble than it is worth, particularly if it once belonged to Roberto Baggio. There can be no question that it will hang heavily with expectation upon the diminutive figure of Gianfranco Zola during Euro '96, but when you have been personally handed Diego Maradona's responsibility perhaps does not seem quite so intimidating. Today, against Russia at Anfield, he will need to justify the faith shown in him.

It has taken Zola a long time to step out of the shadow of his predecessor. The Italian squad has not been until he moved to Parma three seasons ago and was switched from midfield to attack that he really came into his own. Now, aged 29, he has been handed the ultimate accolade: selection ahead of Baggio in the national team as partner to Fabrizio Ravanelli. It has not been one of Arrigo Sacchi's more popular decisions but then few have been. To Sacchi's detractors, Zola epitomises the work ethic which the coach holds so dear at the expense, they believe, of flair.

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Clive White meets the Italy striker with much to prove in England

no Asprilla at Parma. Good enough, anyway, to reduce him to tears when the Colombian decided to pack his bags and head for Newcastle last season.

"Initially, we had a bit of a problem because 'Tino' kept changing wings but it did not stop us scoring 29 goals together in our first season, and we were among the leading pairs the next season too. On neither of us seemed to know what the other one was doing but the other one was doing it better. As you can see I am well built for your high-ball game. I remember in Copenhagen two years ago in the Cup-Winners' Cup final it was the aerial battles with Tony Adams."

His insistence on doing the interview in English, albeit shakily, without recourse to the attendant translator spoke volumes too for his single-mindedness. It may explain why he may eventually have developed such a fine, if not exactly intuitive, understanding with Faustino

modest as Zola, a humorous, affable little man too. Asked if he might follow some of his fellow Serie A performers to England when his contract with Parma expires in 1998, he replied: "Yes, I believe I can play here. As you can see I am well built for your high-ball game. I remember in Copenhagen two years ago in the Cup-Winners' Cup final it was the aerial battles with Tony Adams."

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the forwards." Enough said. Despite the financial success of the Premiership, England will continue to struggle, be it for psychological reasons. I watched the video attentively on Sunday and asked myself who was motivated and who wasn't. It helped me learn which players were concentrated. I want maximum commitment against Russia."

After the Stoke match, Arrigo Sacchi, the Italian coach, admitted: "The game was slow, mainly because of tiredness or lack of motivation. I want maximum commitment against Russia."

As expected, Fabrizio Ravanelli, who has scored five goals in nine internationals, has been left out of the starting line-up. Instead, Gianfranco Zola and Pierluigi Casiraghi will form the strike force. Sacchi plans to use the silver-haired Ravanelli – the scorer of Juventus' goal in their European Cup final defeat of Ajax – in the second game against the Czech Republic, with Enrico Chiesa also hoping for a look-in.

The Russians have the opposite problem to an abundance of riches, as injuries have reduced coach Oleg Romanov's options. Key defenders, Spartak Moscow's Dimitri Khlestov and Ramiz Mamedov, had to be left behind while Sporting Gijon's Igor Lediakow, who would have been his playmaker, is also out.

Consequently much responsibility will fall on Real Oviedo's Viktor Onopko, who can play either in midfield or defence, and Everton's Andrei Kanchelski, who is a potential match-winner on the right wing. Certainly, the Russian strength is up front rather than at the back.

At Old Trafford, a Euro '96 spokesman said: "We suspect that a lot of tickets were bought by corporate hospitality packages, maybe for a run in the tournament. This being the first and weakest game, people wasted their tickets." Just 130,000 tickets are still available for the rest of the tournament. ■ A punter stands to win £1m if Italy and Spain make it to the final. The biggest single bet so far taken by Ladbrokes was placed by a customer in London, who bet £50,000 at 20-1.

■ ITV's audience for England's opening game against Switzerland on Saturday was 10 million.

## Kirton makes defence of ticket sales

Glen Kirton, the tournament director of Euro '96, yesterday rebuffed suggestions that stay-away supporters are threatening the success of the Championship.

Old Trafford was well short of its 55,300 capacity on Sunday, with a crowd of 37,300 watching Germany's 2-0 win over the Czech Republic. Just 24,006 fans saw the 1-1 draw between Spain and Bulgaria at Elland Road, a stadium which has a capacity of 39,000. Kirton still insists that ticket sales have easily outstripped

original predictions and that Sunday's attendances in Manchester and Leeds were not unexpected. "We have sold more than 90 per cent of the 14,000 tickets available for the tournament as a whole – 20 per cent more than our original sales projection," he said. "Nine games are sold out and a further four are near sell-outs. We expect that the limited number of tickets still remaining will be snapped up quickly as the tournament progresses and public interest builds.

"We are delighted that the opening match was a sell-out and that the Denmark v Portugal game at Hillsborough attracted nearly 35,000," Kirton added. "Lower attendances for the other two matches played yesterday reflect the fact that neither the Czech Republic or Bulgaria took up their original ticket allocation of 7,000 per group match."

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